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A HIGHLAND CHRONICLE

BY

S. BAYARD DOD

AUTHOR OF "STUBBLE OR WHEAT"

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PREFACE.

IN one of those spare hours which the great-hearted Edinburgh doctor snatched from his sacred duties as healer of men, to give us glimpses of the breadth and depth of his own nature, and show us some lessons to be had from men and books, he gives the outline of this tale; and suggests that here is material for a wholesome and pleasant story.

If he who drew the outline could have filled in the details, we all know how the story would have distilled strong and sweet.

It would be pleasant to think that the readers of this book would concur in the good doctor's sentiment, that "we are the better of stirring ourselves about these the unknown and long time dead."

CROW HILL,
EAST ORANGE, N. J., 1891.

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A HIGHLAND CHRONICLE.

CHAPTER I.

“A DOUCE BAIRN MAUNNA FORGET HIS FORBEARS.”

JAMES MUIR, third Laird of Stoneywold in the shire of Aberdeen, was born September 29, 1710.

With this averment our story begins. And is it not a fair prologue to a tale? In the first place, it is the plain, honest truth; with which it is well to begin and to end. Secondly, Nature points to it as a suitable beginning, inasmuch as for us the world begins on the day of our birth, and ceases to be when we leave it behind us. After this manner the artists who have portrayed life are wont to open their story, as witness the ancient nursery rhyme of the seven-day life of the man “born on Monday,” and the “Seven Ages” of the great bard which takes a like starting point.

Yet back of this beginning lies a story; at least for all men except that paradoxical old Eastern king, Melchizedek, who looms unborn out of the primeval mist, without beginning of days, without father or mother, without descent; but he was an orphan *sui generis*. For the rest of us there is the unlooked-for accident of birth, which, if it does not befall us, there

is nothing more to be said; but if we meet with this adventure, we are bound to account for it; as it will not submit to be classed among those facts of science which are, but how or why they are we cannot tell.

James Muir knew who his grandfather was, and had the benefit of a personal acquaintance with this sturdy progenitor. An introduction to this old laird will tell us how his grandson came to be the Laird of Stoneywold, a fair estate of some three thousand acres on the north bank of the River Don, in the shire of Aberdeen.

Robert Muir, the grandfather of James, owned a fine estate, on the Ythan, near Ellon, called Heatherside, with rich pasture fields well drained and cultured and a house, which, for three generations, the family had been fashioning to suit their taste and comfort. Having grown up with the family, the Hall was a part of their life, and none of the Muirs seemed, in true fashion, to have wedded unless they went from the homestead to the village kirk near by, and returned to the wedding feast under the old roof tree.

The Laird of Ellon, though at all times a strict adherent of the Kirk and firm in the orthodox belief, which he had inherited along with his estate, was nevertheless so far amenable to the manners of his time that he did not disdain to drink a bout with gentlemen of his own estate, nor was he loath to crack more than one bottle when occasion served; and while he was no drunken reveler he was merry in his cups, and esteemed that his orthodoxy was not impugned thereby. When his blood was once warm with wine he was free with his tongue and free with his money;

and, though he counted this no harm, he paid dear for his whistle, as often happens with those who, having let their brains be stolen, as the poet puts it, have to depend only on their luck.

The Laird of Ellon had been attending a country fair at Old Meldrum; his cattle having fetched a good price, he, being well to the fore with his silver, had joined a party of gentlemen at the Leslie Arms, the old inn that stands by the road to Inverurie; and, when they fell to twitting the Laird, after dinner, he stood his ground to his cost.

"Ye canna snowk a fairer beastie in a' Aberdeenshire than yon red bullock frae the haughs o' Ellon," said Muir.

To which Leslie of Keith Hall made answer, "Aye, the bullock is fine and weel-faured, but the herd is bonnie sma'. The beasties hae eaten their fill o' fodder, for there is scarce ane bullock to the acre."

"Perhaps my Laird of Ellon is loath to put his cattle on sale lest he find himself in the case of a man who, having aince said a guid thing, hauds his mouth, for fear that further speech may bewray him for a fool," said William Gordon, a wealthy merchant of Edinburgh.

This Gordon had grown rich over the counter of his Edinburgh shop, and had the instincts of the tradesman. He had, too, a sense of degradation in regard to his calling in life, born, perchance, of the way that he had practiced it. It was his ambition to become a landed proprietor, on such a scale as would entitle his holding to be called a barony and himself to be saluted as "My Laird." He was shrewd enough

to seek the realization of this ambition far away from the circle of his reputation, where a better bargain might be made, and the limitations which a man often puts upon himself would not hamper him. With this view he had come to Aberdeen, and made his visit yield him both pleasure and profit by some trifling barter with the merchants of that good old town, and spent the intervals between these little transactions in searching through the shire for an estate suited to the measure of himself as a man and a gentleman.

The Ellon estate pleased him well; but he never hinted his appreciation of its loveliness nor his thought of becoming a landed proprietor; but walked over the broad acres listening to the Laird as he proudly recounted their value in words that sank into Gordon's heart. He talked fences and drains, crops and cattle, with the Laird, who came to esteem this Edinburgh merchant a most companionable man, and even suggested to Gordon that his nature and tastes fitted him for the life of a country gentleman; and at his time of life it was well to withdraw from the turmoil of trade and take up the life at which God first set men, which had all the charm and dignity befitting the riper years of a man. He advised Gordon to buy land and settle down to this noble calling and grow mellow in the quiet, pure atmosphere of the life of a country gentleman.

Gordon deprecated his fitness to fill the measure of the Laird's generous description of the just and happy landlord, honored by his tenantry, at peace with himself and with his God. Now, however, he saw an opportunity, which, if rightly used, might be the for-

tunate turn of the tide. His entering wedge was to twit the Laird of Ellon as a timid greenhorn, who could raise cattle by letting them browse over his broad acres, but feared to bring them to market lest the shrewd traders should play him for a gudgeon.

It was a quiet taunt, but it stung the Laird, who prided himself on being a judge of horses and cattle, safe to buy or sell on the hoof with any man in Scotland, be he from Highland or Lowland; and the bonds of his tongue and temper were relaxed by the wine.

“How now, Maister Gordon,” he said, and the accent on the “Maister” stung the broadcloth man; “ye think that I ken nae mair how to sell my cattle than do ye to spin the claith that ye sell ower yer ain counter. But I tell ye, man, there is nane in Scotland, far or near, that can warst me at a bargain on the hoof, forbye the deil himsel’, and wi’ him I am canty enow to eschew all dealin’. I can tell ye to a pound the weight of neat-cattle on the hoof; I’ll tell to a hair what the hide will fetch; and to a penny the price of the carcass; and to a ha’penny what neat land will rent for.”

There was a clink of glasses and a call for more wine to toast the brave Laird of Ellon. This was a very gratifying exhibition of the sympathy of the merry gentlemen, but it did not serve to help the Laird’s wits to encounter the crafty merchant. None drank his health more cheerily than Gordon; none applauded more heartily the Laird’s swaggering boast.

Never again might there come such an opportunity to catch the Laird in this mood, and before gentlemen

too. So he took the applause (aimed in part at himself he knew) in good part and plied the gentlemen with liquor, while he drank sparingly. He took care to keep the talk in the same channel, where the price of cattle, woodland, pastures, houses, and estates were the theme, and bantering jests, stories of horse trades and shrewd bargains went the round of the table; while he sat silent in the attitude of one being initiated. Having bided his time, he threw out the bait.

"My Laird of Ellon, perchance, would hardly daur to name a price for his whole herd, granted that he knows how many his herd contains."

"Faith, man, do ye tak' me for a bairn or a green gillie at a maister's biddin'. I am Laird o' my land and ken every foot o' it, and every hoof o' my herd, every hoof for a ten mile round. I daur name ye a price for my herd and house and lands and a' my gear, were ye man enow to tak' them at the price I wad name."

"Aye, my Laird," answered the cunning tradesman, "a man daurs use bonnie free speech to mak' a bargain that he can break wi' a word. But the glint of the arle-penny that holds him to his bargain is like to sober his speech somewhat."

"Show me your gowd or siller," said Muir, goaded to extremity, in order to show his mettle, and rout this four and twenty tailors all in one, this broadcloth peddler. "Cross my hand wi' your siller, or haud your tongue."

Gordon bit his lips and turned pale, but did not lose his self-command.

"Nay, my Laird," he said, in a soft, insinuating, maddening tone, "God forbid that I should tak' advantage o' a gentleman wha is in no state to barter lands or onything, and wha couldna name a price for a brace o' moorfowl and bide by it on the morrow."

"By what token," replied Ellon hotly, "do ye learn to measure a gentleman as ye mete out your claith? I can match ye at quarter-staff, and I can buy or sell, as your humor suits. So down wi' your siller."

"But, my Laird," said the smooth, imperturbable Gordon. "Ye havena laid a price on your land."

Before Muir could answer, some of the gentlemen, alarmed at his reckless mood, interfered to stop the play, which, as a farce, it amused them to foster, but which would turn out a sorry tragedy if the Gordons supplanted the Muirs on the Ellon estate. It had gone so far now that it must be played to the end, and they must explain, as best they could, their share in it, when it was known through all the countryside who they were whose presence gave binding sanction to this uncanny bargain.

Gordon made no objection to their interference; with a cold, sneering smile he looked at Ellon, across the table, while the gentlemen gathered about him and tried to silence or lead him from the room.

Muir stretched out his hand across the table; Leslie beat it down and Montross caught it and held it firmly in his two hands. Gordon looked on with his set, sneering smile, which seemed to glitter also in his steel-gray eye, and stroked his beard with an easy, meditative motion, his elbow resting on the table.

The Laird of Ellon grew furious. "Unhand me,"

he cried, in a voice husky with anger. "Am I your gillie to do your biddin' wi' what is my ain? I hold my lands by the same title as you hold yours, wi' the right to keep it or sell. I hae cut the leadin' strings, lang syne, and winna wear them noo. Gie me your siller if ye ken the glint o' it. If ye cam' here to play the tune o' a piper, wha can blaw his bags but is naught but a beggar, then gang awa' as ye cam'. For price ye can name it yer'sel, and I'll tak' your siller and bind the bargain."

Gordon had bided his time, and the fortune that befalls the cool and crafty beast, or reptile, or man that waits was within his grasp. Yet he showed no haste in word or action. He did not intend to compromise himself before these men who were to be his neighbors, into whose houses he would enter, whose respect and consideration were to be part of his prize, without which the bare possession of the land would mean merely exile. The same influences governed him in naming the price for the land, which, though far below its value, was not so shamefully low as to introduce him among his future neighbors, the gentry of the shire, as little better than a thief; he took care that the transaction should be respectable. As he named the price some of the gentlemen were still sober enough to beg Ellon to wait till the morrow, and protested against the sale, though they could not cry shame or point the finger of scorn at the tradesman. Through it all Gordon kept his cold, glittering eye fixed on Ellon, and as the Laird, for the third time, thrust his hand across the table, Gordon calmly and deliberately dropped a guinea in the outstretched

palm; and he knew that the Ellon estate was securely his; yet even then did not permit himself the luxury of a visible smile.

The afternoon was waning when the party of merry gentlemen dispersed; and there was no further reference to the transaction which would make that a black-listed day in the annals of the country side, when the Ellon estate passed from the family of Muir into the hands of the Gordons.

While ordering his horses and bustling about the inn the Laird of Ellon sustained his courage with much swagger and bluster, hectoring the grooms and stable boys; but, once on the road homeward, his spirits drooped perceptibly. He was wont to return in high feather from a country fair; for he was a man of consequence, and it pleased him to take the leading position which was accorded him. Whether the talk was of beeves and wool, or of land and the state of the crops, or of politics and the turnpike rebellion, or of the traditional theology of the Kirk; on all these points my Laird was ready with his opinion and was listened to with respect. Therefore, irrespective of his trading well or ill, a country fair was a sort of social triumph for Muir, and he was glad to carry home an account of his success to his bonnie Leddy, who entered into all her husband's concerns with a lively, but not too prying interest. She kept pace, in a wifely way, with all his doings; rode or walked over the estate with him, discussing improvements; knew what an acre should produce, and what the Ellon acres yielded. Over the dairy, hen-coop, and sheep-fold she maintained thorough personal supervision; the

lambs and the calves and the wee, fluffy chicks owed more to my Leddy's watchful eye than to the care of their own natural mothers. She was foster-mother to them all, and many of them remembered the hand that had fed them in the early days of their struggle with life, and, in later years, recognized their benefactress and gave her their mute benison. For it is thus that these dumb animals preach a silent sermon on the gratitude which forgets not a favor when the need of it is past; while men so often resent the recollection, as a debt which they would fain ignore.

Among the Ellon tenantry there were many who did not forget; children, mothers, and fathers who ran to the cottage doors, as Mrs. Muir rode by, to answer her bonnie smile with outspoken blessings. Many a puny bairn which she had nursed into life, while the mother could not care for the perishing little one, with its earliest speech was taught to lisp the prayer that the "Guid God wad bless my Leddy and the Laird of Ellon, and a' the bairns o' that house to the third and fourth generation."

When the cottages were passed, if she were minded to dismount at some pasture field, there was sure to be some shock-haired lad who had run all the way beside the horse to hold my Leddy's pony, and elated beyond measure if it were granted him to hold her wee foot in his hand and give her a mount. It was a sort of badge of promotion on the estate when a lad could say, "I've lifted my Leddy."

The account books of the estate, which it did not comport with the Laird's dignity to handle (for he had an old-fashioned notion that it scarce became a

country gentleman to show an undue familiarity with the tame learning of a clerk)—these books my Leddy kept with a scrupulous care and exactness which sometimes vexed the Laird; for here must be set down at least the gross amount (if not the particular items) of his own expenditures; and these gross amounts had an unpleasant look.

With pen in hand and paper before her, his lady had often seemed to float dimly before his vision as a recording angel; and he was not ready to be summoned beforehand unto judgment.

On his ride home, as the darkness settled down, and the cool evening air drove the fumes of the liquor from his head, leaving only its depressing influences on his nerves, the swash-buckler tone died out of the Laird's speech; and, though he had gotten a fine price for his cattle and his dinner and carouse had cost him nothing (for Gordon had paid the reckoning at the inn for the whole party; and well he might), yet, for all his gains, Muir was in no merry mood, foreseeing a rueful meeting at the end of his journey.

He soundly rated Donald McKay his steward, who handled the reins, being in better trim than the Laird for driving in a darksome night; but at every jolt from rut or stone, he sneered at Donald as a gillie fit only to drive an ox-cart or stagger at the tail of a plow.

Donald was wholly at a loss how to meet this outburst. The bullocks were all sold and at a fine price, which was paid because they were of the famous Ellon stock, and he could not guess what had given his master the megrims.

Their drive home had always been beguiled with

talk over the events of the fair, as gathered from their different points of view, comparisons of bargains and sales of horses and cattle; all in the familiar tone of those, who, in this sphere, were on a common footing.

Donald had grown up on the estate along with the Laird, being about three years his senior. They had been friends from their youth, had fished, hunted, rode, and broke their colts to the saddle together; and neither fish nor colt nor bird saw any difference between the cotter's son and the young Laird.

There could arise no question of Donald's loyalty to the Ellon estate; for he was part of the estate; it was his by a fee of which none could ever rob him, his until death did them part; and even then he would lie under its sod.

He was inclined to resent the Laird's mood, not bitterly, but with proud indignation born of his true-hearted sense of fellowship in all that concerned the Ellon interests, to which, did even the Laird prove faithless, he would bide true.

"Did ye hear Ross of Keith Hall say he wad hae gi'en twa guineas mair for the red bullock, gin he had had a chance to spier him weel, afore Montross snap-pit him up?" said Donald, when they were well on the way.

Under normal conditions this would have been the entering wedge to open up a long interchange of experiences that would have beguiled the hours of the lonely ride. Unluckily just then the wagon dropped into a rut; they were driving at a furious pace, by orders of the Laird, who seemed intent on leaving Old Meldrum behind, little as he had reason to wish

himself at home; and the violent lurch slung Muir almost off his seat. He was in a state of unstable equilibrium, barely sufficient for his safety on a smooth road, and this jolt came near making him bite the dust in literal fashion.

"Donald, ye gillie," he shouted, "'haud your clack and mind your ponies. I'm nae sae anxious for a pocket fu' o' gold, as I am to keep my head in the place where God put it. Ye can keep the twa guineas, if ye'll keep the 'twa corbies' in the straight road."

This was the name by which the two coal-black ponies were known on the Ellon estate, and through all the country side. They were a pair of tough little Highland ponies, fleet of foot and long of wind, and were the favorites of the Laird when he was off for a long, hard drive. They were good for all weathers, cared not a straw for shelter, were not fastidious as to fodder, eating anything from the sweetest corn to the wiry moor grass, or even the tough heather broom, when nothing better was forthcoming. Donald having broken them, loved and trusted them, as they did him.

"The twa corbies," he retorted gruffly, "ken the road by nicht far better than you or I, my Laird. And a wise man trusts a canty pony in the dark, and leaves the guidin' to Providence. If the road doesna please ye, we can gae back to Old Meldrum, and if the gait doesna suit ye, it lacks only your word to slacken a bit; I'm nae fond of boltin' head foremost into a pitch o' mirk like this. But ye gied me the word, and I gied it to the corbies."

"Well, the deil's in the road and in the corbies too," snapped out Muir. "I wasna sae sair beat about in a' my life."

They drove on for a while in silence, until Donald, whose pride had been stirred by the triumphs of the Ellon herd, witnessed by the eagerness, on all hands, to secure at least enough of the stock to put a strain of the choice blood in other herds, could no longer restrain speech. Had he been alone, he would have talked to the "twa corbies," who (so he fancied) would have understood him, and pricking up their ears, arching their necks and swishing their tails (as they do when the corn is sweet) would have stepped higher and more lightly, in recognition of the honor done to the estate with which they were identified. It would not have done, however, to ignore the Laird and talk to the "corbies"; so his loyalty wrestled with his resentment and, the nobler feeling gaining sway, he ventured again:

"Did ye hear McIan o' Glenburnie barter wi' me for a next year's heifer or bullock frae the Ellon herd? And when Montross heard him, he said, 'I'll pay ye twa guineas now for the first choice o' the Ellon herd next year, and, besides the bonus, I to pay the best price that ony yearlin' fetches at the fair.' And he was out wi' his twa gold guineas before I could say him yea or nay."

The luckless Donald could have hit upon no more unhappy theme than the price which the Ellon herd would fetch at the next year's fairing. It was gall and wormwood to Muir, who ground his teeth and cursed the day that brought Gordon to the north

country. That Edinburgh tradesman, with speech as smooth as the bite of a leather-mouthed chub, had filched (yes, it was no more nor less than filching) his ancestral estate, his fair Ellon acres, away from him, and left him nothing but a dirty heap of tradesman's ill-gotten gold. It was small comfort to him that belike he had fared no worse, when the gold was paid him as purchase money, than the purchasers who made bad bargains over the counter, paying for them the gold that now was his. It was ill-gotten from the start, and had a warlock gift to beguile men, leading them astray and stealing their brains, worse than wine. It was elfin in its origin and in its power; it was not the fruit of honest toil, of sowing, reaping, and tilling the soil; but men found it by luck, where the gnomes had hid it, and it bewitched men to look on it. He cursed the guinea which lay heavy in the bottom of his pocket. What did it matter to him who bought the pick of the Ellon herd next year; or the price that they would bring. To his credit be it said, that he bemoaned not the loss of money, but that Gordon should wear the glory of owning the Ellon herd, whose fame was his fame, whose honor was that of his family. Again let us score another point to the credit of this wretched and down-hearted laird. He was repentant over the sorrow which his folly would entail in hall and hovel, but and ben, in byre and fauld.

He was afraid (in a manly sense) to look his wife in the face; afraid to meet the reproachful looks and perchance words of his tenantry; afraid of the dumb accusation which would stare at him from the faces of the sheep in the fauld and the kine in the byre, if they

knew that the hand of the woman they loved was extended to them for the last time.

The broad fields themselves, as they lay under the summer sunshine, would smile a quiet, pathetic remonstrance, and the breeze that swept through the leaves of the woodland would whisper "Esau."

He dreaded, beyond anything that he could have described, to face these reproaches, even those voiceless ones which pierced to the marrow, finding an echo in the inner chambers of his heart. But he felt that the ice must be broken, and Donald was a good one to begin upon, and the cover of the darkness a seasonable time to tell such a piece of news.

"It matters naught to me," he blurted out, as though resenting an affront from his faithful servitor, "what price the kine o' next year may fetch, for the price winna gae to me or mine, but to a deil's bairn frae Edinboro' toun."

Donald was struck dumb; but after some minutes silence, which put my Laird on the rack, he found a reasonable solution.

"Ye'll no' hae been playin' so high, my Laird, that we canna pay the piper wi' the price o' the crops, and so ye'll handle the price o' next year's cattle, as ye and your forbears hae done for mony a year; and they'll do it sae lang as Donald McKay is aboon the gowans."

This was leal and true, but it was far from being a balm to the spirit of the Laird, now wild with the anger of shame.

"Donald," he cried, "ye hae left your wits to wander awa' in the dark, till ye are clean daft and rightly

ken naething that I tell ye. I hae played for nae more nor less than the Ellon estate, and William Gordon's arle-penny lies in my pocket, which binds me to tak' his price and gie him the land, and my word is gane forth before the gentry o' the shire; and I maun bide by it noo, for better or waur," and the Laird groaned in spirit, quailing before the unseen face of his tenant, hearkening for his answer as one awaits the sentence of the judge. There was a dead silence longer than before, in which the darkness seemed to deepen, and the rattle of the wagon, the clink of the harness, and the thud of the hoofs of the "twa corbies" on the road rang out with sharp distinctness on the night air, keeping a sort of doleful rhyme to the Laird's unhappy ruminations.

When the pause had become well-nigh unendurable, Donald answered, with a resonant sigh, "The Lord help us a'!"

After this they rode on in silence until the inn was reached, where they halted for the night, and, setting out early on the morrow, reached Heatherside Hall about noon.

After the first greetings were over, and Mrs. Muir began to question the Laird as to how he had fared at Old Meldrum, what was said of the Ellon cattle, what price they fetched, and he had told of his success, of the fine prices realized and the fair words that had been spoken of the herd, he handed her the gold which was the price of the nine head, and there was one guinea over.

"And what is this guinea," she asked. "Shall I enter it among the cattle sales?" It lay there on the

table between them, its treacherous, yellow face written all over with his accusation.

"No," said my Laird, with all the bravery he could muster in look and tone. "Ye may credit that as the first payment on the Ellon estate, frae William Gordon o' Edinburgh." Then he put his hands on his hips, walked to the window, and looked out over the park, whistling the air of a Highland fling.

"What?" that was all her answer, brief but full of meaning. There was a stormy whistle to the "wh," followed by the broad vowel with the tempestuous roll of a mighty wind, cut off suddenly by the final consonant; like one of those quick silences in the tempest, boding more than the roar of the storm. Ellon felt like a reed shaken with the wind.

After this came an ominous pause suggesting that the end was not yet; but what more could he say; he had told her the truth, the whole truth, and there was the golden token before her eyes. Mrs. Muir, however, was not ready to make such an entry in her books without further information.

"Ellon," she said at last, when his breath would no longer sustain the feeblest cheep of a whistle, "are ye sober, or how cam' a' this about."

"If ye canna tell whan I am sober, ye had better spier o' Donald McKay; but sober or fou', I hae sold the Ellon estate, and ye can enter the price and that guinea as the arle-penny; and we'll settle our minds to mak' the best o' it. Better be blithe wi' little than sad wi' muckle."

"Ellon," she said, "I care naught for your saws.

It's nae question o' little or muckle. Ye tell me that I hae nae mair house nor hame, and for comfort you gie me an old saw, a bone wi'out meat. Wha will tell the tenants that the Laird is nae mair Laird? It is a sorry trade that ye hae made at this fair, Ellon. Far better had your bullocks been drowned in Don water, and your'sel wet to the skin in the bargain; for you could win to the shore wi' the help o' the 'corbies,' or Donald would hae fishit ye oot; but frae this ditch, into which the Gordon has dumpit ye, neither man nor beast will serve to lift ye. Ah! ye are a braw Laird to go a-fairin' wi' his bullocks and lose house and lands, and the fair name o' the Muirs into the bargain. Let us call the tenants and tell them how Robert Muir, Laird o' Ellon, met the Gordon and was pluckit clean as a green goose for the roast."

The Laird was in no mood to resent this attack nor had he weapons to make defense or counter-thrust.

"Perchance I was a wee bit in my cups," he said. "I had quenched the drouth o' a hard day's fairin' in an honest stoup o' wine, and when, later on, they brought a sup o' the mountain dew, I was fain to bear my part, as a gentleman, among my friends and neighbors. The carl frae Edinboro' ate little and drank less. I stood my ground before the tradin' cur, wha was fain to mak' a gowk o' me afore the hale shire, as one who dared not set a value on herds or lands. When he put me on my mettle, I gave him my mind and let the gentry ken that I was not to be brow-beaten by a beggarly tradesman. So I took his

guinea, when I had already passed the word o' a gentleman and couldna retract."

"A' this comes o' your roysterin' at the fair, Ellon. Ye are a bonnie Laird, wha canna rule his ain gullet, and kens not when he is weel and to haud himsel' sae. But I tell ye, Ellon, I winna hear o' ony sic bargain. Ye can tak' the 'twa corbies' when they are foddered and ride straight to Aberdeen and present the compliments o' Mrs. Muir to your bonnie Gordon, together wi' his yellow-faced guinea, and tell him she will hae nane o' it. He can keep his gowd, and we will haud our lands," and she flung the guinea across the table.

"I canna do it," answered Muir firmly, beginning to feel solid ground under his feet. "We wad buy back the land at a sair price, if we paid for it wi' the broken faith o' a Muir. I hae passed my word and ta'en his arle-penny, in the presence o' honest gentlemen. Guid faith and the law o' the land forbid me to gae back on my word; we maun put the best face we can on it, and do as honor bids."

To this the poor lady had no answer to make; for she prized the family name and honor above house or lands. She could face beggary, but the thought of disgrace cowed her—to see her husband looked upon askance by the gentry of the shire, as one who held tenure of his lands by virtue of his broken faith.

The misery of it all came over her and, bursting into tears, she cried, "O Ellon, Ellon, whatever did ye say so for? Why could ye not haud your tongue against yon crafty chiel?"

To this my Laird, having no sufficient answer, with wisdom all too late to do him service in this sad business, held his tongue; and the cruel fact remained for them to meet, in the best spirit they could muster, that Heatherside Hall had passed away from the family of Muir.

CHAPTER II.

“A FAIR SWAP HAS A SONSIE LAVE.”

MR. ROBERT MUIR, quondam Laird of Ellon, being estreped of one estate, in order to maintain the position which his family had held for three generations, as freeholders of Scottish soil, forthwith set himself to the obtaining of another. His late experience led him to profit by the lesson learned from the Edinburgh tradesman, little as he liked the schooling.

In scouring the country in search of a suitable estate, he accepted the invitation of my Lord Frazer to join a hunting party at Castle Frazer.

It was a fine old place in the southwest corner of the shire, with fertile fields bordering the north bank of the Don. For this gentle stream, with its broad rolling valleys famed for their fertility, Mr. Muir had far more liking than for the banks of the brawling Dee, with its woods full of the red deer and the grouse, and its waters flashing to the leap of the stalwart salmon. The old rhyme has it:

Ae rood o' Don's worth twa o' Dee
Except it be for fish, stane, or tree.

Muir believed in old rhymes, and held that it was pleasant to hunt over another man's land, where the

red deer are plenty, but better to be the owner of an estate that bred tamer cattle.

My Lord Frazer was more at home in the forest than in the field, and had let his estate fall into the hands of hirelings to manage; and the old proverb worked itself out, "like master like man." Frazer was hail-fellow-well-met with those of his tenants who loved, as he did, the bay of the pack in full chase, or the whirr of the grouse in the early morn; and, where the hunter's horn is music to the ear of the laird and the hind, the fields lie fallow; the neat-cattle fare but ill while the wild deer are chased, and the neat-herd is lightly esteemed in comparison with the game-keeper.

So my Lord Frazer had brought things to a sorry pass with his love of merry feasting and hunting parties, and was in a poor way to meet the debts which encumbered his estate, and which grew apace, like ill weeds.

This hunting party gave Mr. Muir a fine chance to see the estate, as they scoured it in the chase, over grainfield and fallow ground, and, having an eye well trained to recognize a stretch of arable land, he fell into talk with my Lord Frazer regarding his lands, and found him well informed in regard to the game in his covers, but knowing little about the culture of the rich lands which he had inherited.

"Ye'll be drainin' yon meadow in time for next season's crop," said Muir, overlooking a bit of land, which his practiced eye told him needed but a little ditching to make a harvest field that would return a heavy crop to the acre.

"Well, no," answered Frazer carelessly; "to tell ye the honest truth, I haena muckle faith in this new-fangled notion o' drainin' the earth. Gin the Almighty put the water there, it is as weel to leave it lie, and not spoil a fine moist feedin' ground, which the red deer loves o' a summer night, whan the hill-tops are dry and the buds o' the birch hae lost sap and sweetness. It fattens them fine for the autumn hunt; and I am fain to hae my friends feel that a Frazer red deer is aye worth a hale day's huntin'."

"The red deer winna pay a man's debts; and the land that is full o' them will aye bide the poorest land in the shire," answered Muir.

"I hae yet to learn that it is the part o' a gentleman to borrow the whine o' the tradesman and fash his soul ower the payin' o' his debts," retorted Frazer.

"He needna fash his soul; but he maun pay his debts, be he gentleman or tradesman," replied Muir, "and, to my thinkin', he maun win them frae his land wi' ither cattle than red deer."

"Aweel, to my thinkin'," said Frazer, "a Scots laird can do naught bonnier than live the life o' a laird on his land, and follow the wind o' the hunter's horn and blithely chase the roebuck or hunt the grouse in his covers, and feast his friends on the game, wi' plenty o' good cheer; and, when the game is up and he can nae mair do it, then let him die, or sell his lands and hunt in the covers o' the next man wha can haud acres eneuch to ride ower."

"But, my Laird Frazer, gin a man plays this game, it is short work to reckon the days whan the hunter maun wind his horn ower anither man's land," said Muir.

"Aweel, to say truth, Muir," answered Frazer, "ye are right, and ye're tellin' me only what I ken but too well. I'm haudin' my last season's hunt ower the Frazer acres; anither season will see them in the grip o' a man that has been lendin' and waitin', and they say the deil is ne'er in haste, but aye bides his time. I reckon this man learned his lesson frae the deil, and he hasna muckle langer to bide. But it irks me sair to see him win to the day when he can tell me that my ain is nae mair mine, but his."

Muir was touched; having been in like case, he felt for the Laird Frazer.

"These money-lendin' carls are aye the same breed," he said, with bitter recollection of his disastrous encounter with Gordon. "I wad buy Castle Frazer mysel', were it ony less bitter for ye to see me on the estate, than to hae yon maister money-bags lordin' it ower the tenantry, aping the manners o' a gentleman."

"Aye, that it wad be," answered Frazer heartily. "I will gladly name ye the bare debt for price, and if ye are minded to tak' the bargain, ye can gie me forty guineas, and wi' that I will quench the usury o' the debt, and will gie notice to Shylock that he can write me a discharge, and I'll pay the debt in full as soon as ye can fetch me the gold."

So these merry gentlemen made their bargain with a fine disdain of the crafty methods of the tradesman, and were ready for a jovial celebration of its easy conclusion, so satisfactory to both; for by it Muir was reinstated in the caste to which he belonged, and Frazer was delivered from the clutches of a man

whose greed was that of Shylock, without the excuse that Shylock might plead.

Their bargain was sealed by a payment on the spot, and my Lord Frazer, after paying his usury, went back to Frazer Castle in no such sorry mood as Muir's when he rode home after the sale of the Ellon estate.

On the contrary he was highly elated, having other estates left; and, being a free man now, he could browbeat the cringing money-lender, call him Shylock, and offer to spit upon his beard.

When he reached home he greeted his lady cheerily, and recounted with pride the fine transaction. But he had reckoned without his host, for the shrewd and canty wife refused to sanction my Lord's hasty bargain.

In vain Frazer protested stoutly, "The thing is done, I tell ye. I hae the Laird o' Ellon's gold; I can nae mair gae back o' my word. Will ye hae the hale shire point at me as the laird wha passed his word and forfeited his faith to a gentleman?"

"The hale shire may point, as it suits them," replied the lady. "And for that matter ye may do as it pleases ye. I speak for mysel' only; and I tell ye, Frazer, I wasna in at the bargain and I'm not bound by its terms. If the Laird o' Ellon tak's the house, he tak's me wi' it; for here I was born and here will I bide until the Lord ca's me to the better hame."

"Aweel, ye maun bide, but when Ellon comes to claim the house and land which he has bought, then I and the bairns gae to Brawburn House," answered Frazer firmly.

Since her lord was not to be moved to recede from

the terms of his barter, my Lady Frazer posted off to Mrs. Muir to plead her cause before that tribunal; and found that she had to deal with no stern judge; women understand so well the finer principles involved in such a case. She reminded Mrs. Muir of the loss of her own estate, and drew the picture so to the life, that it brought tears to the lady's eyes; and then Lady Frazer knew that her cause was won. The two ladies were soon weeping in each other's arms, and she who had come to stir the waters of grief now strove to comfort, and as she strove made more certain the winning of her case.

What could two men avail against such a tender league as these two women had avowed? Like good men and true they followed the counsel of their wives.

Muir accepted as an equivalent of the Gordon's gold (which he was glad to be well rid of) the estates of Stoneywold, Clintney, and Brawburn on Donside; which being afterward joined under the name of the Barony of Stoneywold, the former Laird of Ellon was himself again as the Laird of Stoneywold.

Along with the title deeds Lady Frazer, in recognition of the mercy that had spared her home, sent to Mrs. Muir a green silk purse, which her own hand had netted, with a golden guinea in it for a "bonnie token"; and to Mr. Muir, who was a stanch Jacobite, she gave a portrait of Charles I. painted by Van Dyke, which hung in the Stoneywold house; and the Bible which the hapless monarch had used in prison, with the initials C. R. written with his own hand on the fly leaf; and the insignia of the Star and Garter which the king had worn; all which had come to her family

from Bishop Juxon, who attended the king upon the scaffold. These relics were in a large stone sarcophagus which stood in the hall of the Stoneywold house, bound with heavy iron bands and the hasps secured by padlocks. And thus, with happy auguries, the Muirs took possession of the house that was to be a home for them and their children for many generations.

Stoneywold had been the ancient family seat of the Frazers of Muchals, now of Castle Frazer. It was situated about twelve miles up the Don from the old town of Aberdeen, and ten miles, in a direct line, from the sea.

The old house was a massive granite structure built around three sides, and in part along the fourth side, of a quadrangle. The front was flanked on either corner by high towers pierced with port-holes for musketry, and with battlements which commanded the strong, oaken entrance doors banded with iron, and also the courtyards and the wings. Anciently there had been a moat around the walls, with drawbridge and portcullis; but now the moat was filled, and of the drawbridge there remained only the heavy eyebolts through which the chains of the portcullis ran. Across the rear and connecting the wings ran a stone wall, four feet thick, pierced with a low-arched postern gate; and along the outer edge of this wall ran a battlement, affording a point of vantage to resist an attack in the rear. The old house had been built in the days when a man held his own until a better than he took it from him; and it therefore behooved him to make his house his fortress. The large quadrangle had more

than once been stocked to withstand a siege, and the deep well, in the center of the courtyard, had been put there with an eye to defense rather than convenience.

As one enters the arched portal, a broad flight of steps leads into a hall to the left, which is floored and wainscotted to the ceiling with oak, dark with age. The ancient armor hanging on the walls harmonized well with the dark old oak. The guns, arquebusses, bows, and spears, together with the antlers and trophies of the chase, gave it the aspect of the arsenal of some old fortress, and made one feel that a sturdy race had flourished there, men of war and mighty hunters in their day.

A richly carved cabinet stood on one side of the hall, and, on the other, the stone sarcophagus in which were enshrined the relics of that luckless family, who had the fatal power to charm men to their own undoing, for whom Scotland has poured out her best blood like water spilled on the ground.

Beyond this hall, which terminated in the left-hand tower, was the reception-room and dining hall, and beyond these, in later days, there had been added a conservatory or winter garden.

On the other side of the main entrance a similar flight of granite steps led into the counterpart of the great oaken hall, which was hung about with family portraits, for the most part very crude from an artistic point of view, and for the credit of the family it may be hoped not strictly true to life as portraits; but they were the presentment of veritable people, each with the name attached, a genuine family tree.

Beyond this family gallery, past the round tower, in which was the staircase leading to the sleeping apartments, were the parlors, with high vaulted ceilings and smooth waxed floors, which had been the scene of many a gallant gathering where flying feet chased the hours "ayont the twal."

Back of these parlors was the Laird's office, where he received his tenants and transacted the business of the estate; and, from this, the postern wall stretched over to the other wing.

In front of the house a lawn, about thirty acres in extent, slopes gently down to the River Don, which here took a turn in its course and thus encompassed a patch of about one mile of fertile ground, which, broken here and there by clumps of fir and beeches, was a resting place for the long thwart shadows at noon, and again at evening they fell across the rolling sward.

There were resting places for the song-birds in the clumps of trees, and flowers in the meadow to lure the humming bees. It was a spot full of quiet beauty, with an easy grace, like the slow movements of a stately woman; it charmed the eye and held the thought in reverie. With nothing impressive in the scene, its gentleness beguiled the eye to look and linger on it. It was such a bit of landscape as the windows of a happy home should overlook; and so thought Mrs. Muir as she watched her children play, while she drank in the beauty of the scene, letting its gentleness speak peace to her spirit. Homelike and Scottish it was; and that filled the measure of her desires.

So my Laird and Lady of Stoneywold entered upon their life in this section of the shire, the Laird bustling about the place, building up and tearing down, fencing and ditching his lands and turning many a fallow into a grain field. Mrs. Muir once more took oversight of the accounts and of the young creatures that came to increase the flocks and herds of Stoneywold. She and my Lady Frazer were firm friends, and their children after them, and were leaders of society in this section.

Here there were born to this devoted couple four children, in addition to three which they had brought with them, to gladden the old house and make the lawn merry with their sports.

With only one of these has our family history to do, James, the eldest son, who fell heir to the estate and, in due time, took to himself a wife in the person of Miss Helen Mackay of Aspen Hall, of an ancient family whose several generations were known as honorable men and gentle women. She had many suitors from far and near, for she was dowered richly with wealth and beauty; but James Muir won the prize at last, after many an encounter which drove his impatient spirit to the verge of distraction.

When he brought home in triumph his bonnie bride, there was a famous festival. The tenants assembled in holiday attire and greeted the young couple as they rode under the arch of evergreen with its suspended horseshoe. The entrance steps were well strewn with sandy loam, and, on either side, a maiden stood, broom in hand, to sweep the steps for the passage of the bride, halting her on the threshold until her hus-

band had crossed it, thus making sure of his place as master of the house.

The blessing of the bride whom the sun shines on was hers, and the children of the cotters, for many a mile round, strewed wild flowers in her path; for all of whom she had a smile and a light in her bonnie blue eyes, which won her a way to their hearts.

There was a feast on the lawn for the tenantry, with good cheer for all, and afterward they played at golf, quintain, wrestling, and putting the stone; and the prizes from the hand of the young bride seemed well worth striving for.

And all this merry-making was done to the strains of the bagpipe, that monotonous melody so dear to the heart of Scotia's sons, suited to rouse them to valourous deeds or to warm the cockles of the heart.

Roy Lachlan, the leader of the band of pipers, had a rude gift of extempore rhyming, and when the games were ended, with a proud humility he stepped forward and doffed his bonnet, letting his long, scant, white locks fall around his face, which gave him the weird look of a veritable bard. The inspiration of the occasion lifted him above the piper at a country fair or a cotter's wedding, as, with his eyes fixed on the battlements of the old tower, he began a recitative ballad, adjuring the old pile to shed its storied honor over this family who had come to make this their home, to shelter them and make them know the honor and peace which had ever dwelt within those walls.

“ Ancient towers of granite strong and gray
I bid ye listen to my wedding-welcome lay ;
Haud up your heads in night time or the day,
And gie your shelter to my Laird and Leddy gay ;

Ye've been the beacon frae the days o' old
That told men where to look for Stoneywold ;
And when they came and sought a shelter here,
They found a plenty, welcome and good cheer."

Then, turning to the woods and fields, he adjured them to yield a good return, and then, in gentler strains, welcomed her who had come from other braes and burns to bloom, like the lily and the rose, on the banks of the Don, praying that Heaven might bless her and the Laird and make them know how bonnie was the lot of those to whom love and gentleness were more than house and lands and worldly gear; closing with this strain:

"Fauld her, oh sunshine, in your gentle rays,
Play round her, winds, your soft and pleasant lays,
Frae every airt bring dews and gentle showers
To bless her life and strew her path wi' flowers."

It was very homely, but the tenants reckoned old Lachlan among Scotia's immortal bards; and, if this may not be his mead, yet none could gainsay him the honor of having done what he could to honor the fair young bride.

Helen thought it no small honor to be the heroine of this bardic lay, for it voiced the loyal devotion of the tenantry, who listened, awe-struck, to one with whom they mingled in everyday life exercising the mystic power of the poet.

A short speech from the young Laird, thanking them for the homecoming given to him and his bride, endorsed by a smile and bow of thanks from the bride herself, closed the festivities, after which the tenants dispersed to gather in little groups and discuss, in

every detail, the young Leddy, for not a look or word or smile had passed unnoted by some one of the searching pairs of eyes that had scanned her all that afternoon.

Together with her own sweet self she brought a dower of four thousand pounds, and ten golden guineas for the green silk purse, with her mother's counsel never to borrow from it save in times of urgent need, and always to put into it some portion of each year's proceeds from the sale of crops and herds. The pith of her counsel lay in the wish with which she ended it: "May its sides never meet."

The young mistress of Stoneywold brought to her new home much of the spirit and training of so wise a mother, and was a fendy wife to young Muir.

It happened not long after the birth of her first-born, young James II., that the Laird was going to the neighboring fair at Woodburn to buy cattle, and was constrained to borrow from the funds on hand, and so the green silk purse was filled with golden guineas and carried along to the fair.

While her husband mingled with the drovers and traders, inspecting their cattle and driving his bargains, the young wife, wandering listlessly on the outskirts of the fair, striving to forget the slow flight of time, and thinking more of her baby boy, ten miles away, than of all the bustle and stir about her, came upon a tidy young woman, sitting on a grassy bank by the roadside, nursing her child. This was a tie between them, stronger than the difference in rank, and so they quickly made acquaintance, and down sat

Mrs. Muir by her side, hungry for her child, as doubtless he was for her.

"'Tis a bonnie bairn that ye cuddle to your breast," said the young Lady of Stoneywold, looking kindly on the mother. "It minds me o' my ain Jamie, and my heart grows weary for my bairn."

"Aye, my Leddy," answered the woman, rising and courtesying and holding up the wee Scot, with motherly pride. "Wi' your Leddysip's leave, I am Ailie Duncan frae Moneymusk, and I bide here for my gudeman wha is tradin' at the fair."

The young Scot set small score by the courtesies, which broke in upon his placid enjoyment, which was his way of making merry at the fair. He entered such a lusty protest as made him heard above the bleating of the sheep and lowing of the kine, and put all further talk out of the question until his demands were met.

Then Mrs. Muir reached out to take him, and once having him in her arms, the mother instinct grew strong.

"Will ye lend me your bairn, that I may think I fauld my ain Jamie to my breast," she said to Ailie.

"Surely, my Leddy," answered Ailie, handing the child over. "And I'll tell my bairn, when he is grown to be a braw lad, to be mindfu' that aince he was fostered by a led dy o' high degree, and he maun aye remember to keep himsel' frae disgrace."

So Mrs. Muir sat down in Ailie's place, happy to have the child in her arms, as he was content to be there. For her better protection Ailie threw her own

cloak over Mrs. Muir's head, which answered the purpose of a disguise. Thus she sat while the young mother wandered off into the bustle of the fair to discover what had become of her gudeman.

While sitting thus hooded and alone by the roadside, with the nursling in her arms, to her great consternation there was a quick step behind her, the corner of the plaid was hastily lifted and into her lap was thrown the green silk purse, with the shining gold within. The whispered utterance, "Tak' tent o' that," was the only message that accompanied this strange adventure. The man was off before she could throw aside the hood, encumbered as she was with the child; and there in her lap lay the purse with which her husband, scarce an hour ago, had gone into the fair to purchase his cattle. She hastily counted the gold; not a guinea was missing.

She was frightened and unnerved by the adventure; evidently she was known to someone, even under her disguise; and what had befallen her husband, he had been robbed, perhaps murdered; her impulse was to fly, but whither should she go encumbered as she was with the child and her disguise. There was nothing for her to do but to summon what patience and courage she could muster and watch for Ailie Duncan's return. When Ailie came, she flew to meet her, handed her over the child and hurried toward the fair; and her fears were soon allayed by the sight of her husband's stalwart form, among a group of traders.

He had just concluded a bargain for some cattle and was standing, with a horror-struck face, searching his pockets in vain for the green silk purse. As the

look of blank despair settled on his features and he gazed with vain inquiry into the faces of those around him for a solution of this enigma, there, on the outskirts of the crowd, stands his smiling wife ready to extricate him from this predicament, as she had from others less serious.

Pressing her way through the crowd she counted out the price of the cattle, and, taking her husband by the arm, led him away dumb with amazement at the loss of his money and its mysterious restoration. As they rode home she told him the story of her strange adventure. And home with them we must go, in order to solve the mystery of the green silk purse.

CHAPTER III.

“FAR FRAE COURT, FAR FRAE CARE.”

THERE was in the employ of the Laird of Stoney-wold a servitor named John Gunn, a man of no mean family, although its fallen fortunes had forced him into a somewhat lowly position.

There was no gentler blood in Ross-shire than that of the old family of the Gunns, and in adversity, they were still true of heart, brave and honorable in misfortune, and proud of their ancient lineage.

With this same John Gunn our story will have much to do, and it may be well, at the outset, to get some notion of that manner of man he was. Physically he was a fine type of his sturdy race, standing over six feet in his brogues, somewhat spare in person, large-boned and sinewy, with great power to endure toil and sustain it long; his clear blue eyes were honest and searching and his auburn hair was thick and curly, like a young bullock's between the horns.

There was a shrewd twinkle to his eye and a catching smile about his mouth that accorded well with his speech; for he was a man of few words, but they were well chosen. His arms were long, with an easy and mighty swing to them, as though made to handle the hammer of the smith, or the scythe of the mower, or the quarter-staff of the gypsy. His long swinging

stride and unflagging trot gave one the impression that it was as easy for him to go as to stand still. He had trod the moors when he was young, and made forced marches in his time, and there was a moorland reach in his stride mingled with a military precision, suggesting that it would be no trifle to arrest his steps, or, for that matter, to make him keep step with you.

He bore the sobriquet of "Long Jock"; some called him "Lang Louper," behind his back. Men shrank from encountering him in any kind of contest, for his wit was searching, and his knowledge of human nature such as comes from intimate acquaintance with men in circumstances that stripped them of conventional disguise and let the bare man show through. He was familiar with scenes that try the fiber and tell what strain it will endure—border skirmishes, bold dashes in the face of death where each man works out his own salvation or is lost, long marches evading hot pursuit; scenes where faith and honesty must be relied on without question, and a man's passing word must be a pledge as sacred as a covenant sealed with blood.

Hence he knew men well; knew the moral forces that go to the making up of character and what the resultant of certain forces was like to be; knew how to touch men so as to sound the keynote of their nature, when to put an implicit child-like reliance on them, and when to deal with crafty caution and not commit himself to them.

He was a good judge of men at sight; for there was a certain quality to his look, right into the eyes of a man, and a meditative manner of speech (or rather

of letting himself be spoken to) which gave men the impression that he was sifting them by a process from which there was no escape; and they were wary of trying to make game of him. When once his word was passed, you could depend upon him as on the coming of the tide up Solway Firth.

He knew not what men call fear. Whether he felt the motions of it in his breast and subdued them before they reached the eye or cheek or any outlet that revealed them to men, or whether it never passed his mind to be afraid of man or beast or spirit, none could say; but he had faced death so often and in such diverse forms, that the familiar thought had lost its terror.

He had been reared among the stirring echoes of the rising of 1715, and his sturdy spirit responded to them, and, following the traditions of his family and the motions of his own nature, he had enlisted in a Highland regiment. With the strong instinct of his people, recognizing the patriarchal authority of the chiefs of the clans and the feudal manner in which that authority was maintained, he was ready to yield devoted adherence to the despotic sway of the head of the clan; and, if the prominence of his family had entitled him to the place of a petty chieftain amenable directly to the head of his clan, nothing could have swerved him from his loyalty; but the fallen fortunes of his family entitled him to no higher place than that of a common soldier; and the place was too small for the man.

He enlisted with the hope that he should thus be made ready for the day when the Highland spirit would assert itself against the Saxons, who were fast

converting the Lowlanders into a nation of traders and cowards. Already their sacrilegious hands had been laid on the ancient Highland privileges; they had practically disarmed the clans, had built their forts and square towers through the Highlands to overawe them, were making roads and spanning the glens and burns with their bridges, in order to subject the Highlanders to English sway.

John Gunn had enlisted in the "Black Watch," as the English called the Highland regiment, believing that, under a Highland chief, he was to serve on Highland soil in keeping down the armed vagrancy of "the broken men" (Highlanders who, owning no chief, wandered in marauding bands), and against such, who repudiated the legitimate patriarchal authority, he was willing enough to serve.

But, after his enlistment, he found that the "Black Watch" was a mere name with which to ensnare them; for they were officered by Englishmen and Lowlanders, and the terms of their enlistment bound them to serve the king on any soil, and it was soon whispered that they were destined for foreign service.

Against this they protested that they had been kept in ignorance of any such obligation; and they complained of broken faith, and muttered rebellion.

"We are gentlemen," they said, "accustomed to be attended by a gillie from the humble commoners of the clan, and our blood is more ancient than that of many of England's proudest families."

In their own country all this would be accorded them, but, in other lands, they would be on a level with the refuse of the Saxon peddlers.

Their suspicions were confirmed when they were ordered to take the route to England; and it was a moot question whether the regiment would silently melt away, or stoutly refuse to move a step.

The discontent was allayed by the flattering assurance that the king was anxious to review his loyal Highlanders in their unique garb; and so they took up their march, still murmuring discontent, but cajoled by the king's desire to see them.

Their march southward was an ovation, if the crowds of rustics who gathered to stare, half in wonder, half in fear, at these wild mountaineers in their strange attire, could be accounted a tribute of admiration.

When they reached Finchley Common there was no king, for George II. was conducting a campaign on the Continent. Instead of the king there was a gaping crowd, who received them with abundant evidence of interest, but in a manner that was galling to their pride. They found themselves objects of wonder and derision to a motley rabble, which they held in proud contempt. Jeers and jibes at their strange attire were followed by all manner of practical jokes, which culminated in the parade of a regiment of half grown lads in pantalets and striped petticoats, flaunting banners with caricatures of the clan emblems, and singing ribald doggerel at their expense, to the strains of a bagpipe extemporized from a blade of grass, which from time immemorial has been an instrument dear to the heart of a boy. This crowning indignity to their national costume and music was in such form that they could not resent it; but it drove them to a desperate remedy.

It was John Gunn who was the leader in planning and executing the bold maneuver.

"Do ye see yon hirsle o' scabbit gawkies?" said John, to two of his fellow-clansmen. "Do ye mind their toggery and how they flyte us for aliens? Are they ony kin to us; and what hae we to do fightin' the battles o' the kine that breed sic calves?"

"Aye, we are bound on a fine errand," said Angus McLean; "to be flouted by sic a pack o' gomerils. They'll send the Highland men to the fore, and shelter their thin hides frae the bullets behind a bield o' stout men and true."

"And, gin this be our greetin' frae the children, on the king's ain ground, what welcome will the fathers gie us on foreign soil?" growled another.

"They say that the Scots are aye food for the Frenchman's powder, and that ane o' them mak's a breastwork for twa Saxon curs to cower behind," threw in a third bystander.

"Hoot man," said Angus, "do ye speir yon blackamoor, wi' the banner o' the Black Watch? An' I had my way wi' a good quarter-staff I wad blacken his hide that it wad last him mony a day, and to the hour o' his death he wad remember how he played at bein' ane o' the Black Watch."

As the boys pranced around the outskirts of the camp, with a mincing gait and holding out their skirts, singing a ribald snatch ending with the refrain:

"Black Watch, Black Watch,
See the Highland beggars scratch,"

there was barely discipline enough to keep the more

restive spirits from breaking through all military restraint and giving their tormentors a taste of Highland sinew. Those who scorned to lay hands on the rabble were full of bitter indignation, which was not allayed by the evident sympathy of the masses with these idle jesters.

"Will the morrow fetch another flock to mock us wi' new devices?" said Angus. "For my part, I am ready, gin I hang for it, to show them how a Highland man can shoot. Is there naught for us to do, but stand like sheep faulded in a slaughter-bught?"

"The king will sell us to the Germans or put us in the French shambles," said another.

"For my part," said a third, "I wad as lief be shot for garrin' yon gillies ken that a Highland man kens the honor due his land and can defend it, as to be shot down defendin' the tradesman's buntin'."

"And I gie my consent," chimed in another, "for a loaded gun in every man's hand on the morrow, and we'll gie them a Highland salute on the next parade. Faith that wad make a 'black watch' in earnest for the beggar crew."

One after another gave in his adhesion to this plan with a tone that indicated the settled purpose of men who were not debating, but announcing their decision.

John Gunn stood silent, after the first few words with which he had directed their attention to the outrage, gathering his impressions of the temper of the men, now nodding assent to one, again, with a look of inquiry, eliciting the sentiments of the more reticent of the group. The expression of his face was calm but dangerous.

"Lang Jock," said Angus, turning to him, "hae ye naught to say? Can ye speir ony better way than to gie yon snaggerels a taste o' guid powder and shot."

"I think so," answered John.

"And is that a' the speech ye can spare to your comrades?" replied Angus as he stood gazing on the retreating urchins. "Gin ye wot o' a better way, let us hear it anon. What wad ye bid us do? Bide a wee and girn and bear it?"

"I wad leave," said John.

"And by whose leave, when we are here under the king's orders?" retorted Angus testily.

"Honor bids us leave," answered John.

"And wha will guide us the way and tak' command o' the troop?" queried Angus.

"I will do it," said John; "and, gin ye swear to follow, I will swear to lead ye."

The men gathered close about him, as he lowered his tone and detailed his plan, appointing his lieutenants and assigning them to go among the regiment and inform the men of the arrangements. He fixed the time of the departure at a half hour after midnight, the regiment to move in four detachments, each leaving by a different route, and to rendezvous a mile away from camp. They were not to encumber themselves with anything save their meal-pocks and their claymores, were to turn in quietly for the night, and were forbidden to gather, even in small groups, to discuss the plan.

All this John detailed in a matter-of-fact way, as though the desertion of a whole regiment were an everyday occurrence. There was no discussion, he

simply announced it as the one thing to do, under the circumstances, and it was accepted in the same spirit by all who heard him, and, in fact, by almost the entire regiment.

So it came to pass that, one bright May morning, all London was astounded by the news that the rank and file of the Highland regiment, from which the gay citizens of the metropolis had been deriving so much amusement, had mysteriously disappeared in the night. The wildest rumors were afloat, and, with no small consternation, it was suggested that this was the initial step of another rebellion; and ere many days, this semi-savage horde might return with reinforcements to avenge the insults heaped upon them; for thus did conscience invent for the wrong doers an impossible retribution, and afford the Highlanders a temporary revenge on their tormentors.

Under the guidance of their crafty leader they were hastening northward, making their way from one waste common to another, by forced marches at night, lying hidden by day, and shunning the highroads and the towns.

They were past Northampton before any definite news of them was had by the military authorities. Here and there some rustic was impressed as a guide, or an outlying farm was levied on for rations, and wherever men fell in with them, on lonely roads or barren wastes, they inspired a terror which went far to repay, with compound interest, the jeers of the Saxons which had driven them to this escapade.

From Northampton, where their necessities had compelled them to let their presence be known in

forays for subsistence, they marched down the river toward Peterborough.

"Lang Jock," though barely a man in years, had shown himself a skillful leader, keeping his men from marauding (willingly as he would have granted them leave to plunder the foe), because he knew that they would not be left to go their own way in peace, and foraging would at once delay the march and advertise the route. With this argument he restrained his men, and kept them busy with the thought and occupation of reaching their own Highland fastnesses. On the third day they were encamped on the north bank of the Nen about half-way between Oundle and Peterborough, where a sharp bend of the river protected them in flank and rear. It was John's purpose to lead them up through Lincoln to the West Riding of York, and so reach the Pennine Hills, where they would be more at home and safer than on the flat lands; thence along the borders of Westmoreland and Cumberland to the Cheviot Hills; and, when once they were on Scottish soil, to let them disperse, and, singly or in small bands, make their way to the Highlands. The way seemed plain enough, but John had reckoned without his host; for His Majesty's troops had not lain idly waiting the pleasure of his liege Highlanders to go or come at their whim.

They heard, here and there, rumors of pursuit, and, on the evening of the third day, the troopers came in sight and their captain summoned the band to surrender, which summons gained emphasis from the carbines shining at their saddle bows, while the Black Watch carried nothing but their stout claymores.

The night was falling; John had his men well posted in a copse on a bit of rising ground, with the river in his rear. Nothing daunted by the disparity which their lack of arms created, John answered the summons to surrender by an offer to capitulate on honorable terms; to wit, that free pardon be granted them one and all; that they be permitted to retain their arms; that such as were inclined would take service in the king's army and be drafted into English regiments; that such as preferred service on Scottish soil be enlisted, with the proviso that they should be called on to undertake no foreign service.

To this demand, made with the calm assurance of the commander of a fortress which can be taken only at the cost of time and men, the English captain's answer was an imperative summons to unconditional surrender. He granted them the night to ponder on their situation and prospects, warning them that by noon of the morrow their day of grace was past; then he posted his sentinels and retired for the night to Oundle.

Then was the spirit of John Gunn tried as by fire. He held a council; but the darkness of the stormy night seemed to brood over their deliberations. Opinions were divided; some were for immediate surrender, others for accepting the issue, sword in hand, and fighting their way through the Saxon horde and laying waste farms and villages on their march to Scotland, leaving behind them a trail blackened with the smoke of the fires they had kindled, making the Saxons remember, for all time, the march of the Black Watch for freedom and Scotland.

But John Gunn had not forgotten the tales he had heard of the rising of 1715, with the disastrous outcome of brave, but raw, levies pitted against the disciplined soldiers of England.

They were more than two hundred miles from Scottish soil, and another one hundred and fifty from the Grampians, as the eagle flies. Burning farms and pillaged towns would not make their march more rapid or unobstructed. But he let the ferment of feeling bubble, sure that the scum would rise to the top, and, after all was said and done, he would know the frothy braggart from the sound and solid men.

When near an hour was passed in this turbulent sort of council of war, Angus McLean appealed to him for his advice.

"Ye can bide wi' the king's army and find plunder and plenty in the foreign wars, or ye can tak' your life in your hands and gae to Scotland. These are the only twa ways; and ilka man maun choose for himsel'."

There was a dead silence after these few words, broken only by the melancholy croak of two ravens, which had lit on the tree above his head, whose apt response was an Amen to the collect recited over the grave of their hopes.

"Aye," said John grimly, looking up at the ill-omened birds, "the corbies ken where the carcass is like to be."

To the murmur which rose from some who, preferring the heroic issue of the adventure, began to prate of cowardice, John made answer: "Ye canna win

your way nigh four hundred miles to the Highlands, wi' naught but claymores agen carbines. If ye maun fight, here is the place and now is the hour, and I'm ready to lead ye."

But the thing was so hopeless, on the face of it, that there was no response to his invitation.

The majority determined to surrender on the unconditional terms which were all that were accorded them. As for those who discarded this prudent solution, it was understood that each man should adopt such means of escape as seemed best to him, without reproach of having forsaken his comrades.

And so the darkness settled upon them, and each man that chose to do so passed the sentinels unchallenged and unknown. They bid one another farewell as those who would never see each other's faces again, and, without malice or bitterness, yielded to the necessities of an evil hour; they kept inviolable the secret of the names of their comrades, when the morning light told them which of their number wandered, proscribed as deserters.

Six of them were chosen and put to death as examples of military discipline; a part were sent to the West Indies and the remnant to Flanders, where they began that career of military glory for which the Scottish regiments have ever since been famous in the history of English wars.

The lowering day which had shrouded in gloom the last hours of the march of this little band of brave men, grew into a tempest as the night wore on. The wind rocked the tree tops and went whistling on over the fields. It was Whitsuntide, when strange sights

and sounds are abroad, and this night was one famous in the annals of the north of England.

The night was pitch dark, save for transient glimpses of the moon through the cloud rack, and from sea and land came tales of terror.

One old chronicler repeats the story of a skipper driven up the Solway Firth before the furious blast, when, by the dim moonlight through a broken rift, the lookout reported a sail moving as though to cross their bow. As they peered into the darkness there loomed, between them and the horizon, a great stage-coach with a retinue of coachmen, footmen, and outriders bearing torches lit with a pale blue flame.

With strange clamor of shouts and cracking of whips, heard above the rattle of the cordage and the roar of the storm, the coachman drove his horses at a furious speed over the crests of the waves, in the teeth of the tempest. Not till they were well away did the skipper gain presence of mind to hail the uncanny craft. "Where from?" he shouted.

The answer came down the wind: "From —— to Collyn." The port of departure was heard clearly enough by every man of the crew; but none was bold enough to repeat it above his breath.

It was a fearful night, when warlocks and witches held high carnival and there was a revelry of "bogle-wark."

The hag is astride
This night for to ride
Though ne'er so foul be the weather;
In a dirty hair lace
She leads on a brace
Of black boar-cats together.

Frightful personages and nameless things, says the old chronicler, came trooping from every quarter, below and aloft; the trough of the sea was full of them.

Headless horsemen furiously galloping came from the clouds. At noon of night the Specter Dog of Man, the dread Mauthe Hounde, came forth, whose bark bodes ill to passing ships. All then hastened to the spot where the haunted ships of the Solway—which float only at such times—had risen with all sails set and each one tenanted with a ghastly crew; the streaming lights of their cabins shone through the darkness, and the sound of wild mirth, the clamor of tongues, the unearthly whoop, halloo, and song rang far and wide across the sea.

From the specter ships there were shriekings cast
That were heard above the stormy blast.

It was on this night that the brief life of the "Black Watch" came to an end, when the powers of earth and the demons of air were leagued to disperse them.

As for John Gunn, he let each man choose his way without further hindrance, and made his own choice without asking counsel of any. He thirsted not for glory in foreign wars and would rather die in Scotland than live in any other land; so, amid the tempest, in the darkness just before the dawn, he rose silently and left the camp, made his way to the river and started northward down the stream. He put a good five miles between himself and the camp before venturing to leave the water; and lay hidden all the

next day in a copse on the further side of the river.

By long and weary night marches, he pursued, alone, the route which he had laid out for the band. On the sixth day, even his powers of endurance were being tasked to the utmost, having covered the stretch of the West Riding of York to the north side of the Pennine Hills, near the Westmoreland borders. Here and there he had ventured to spend the night in a cow-shed or stable and help himself to the fodder from the bins; but it was dry, hard fare, and his lusty stomach craved a more savory diet, and his ears thirsted for human speech.

On the border of the North Riding he fell in with a band of gypsies encamped on the edge of a waste common. The savory smell of roasting fowl was wafted across the hollow to where John lay asleep among some hayricks, and it mingled with his dreams and set his mouth to watering after a most uncomfortable fashion.

The penetrating odor had filled his brain with visions of feasting, until the pangs of hunger broke the bands of his heavy sleep, and he woke to the consciousness that he must have meat to eat, cost what it might.

Following the scent as true as a hound on the trail of a deer, he reached the brow of the little eminence behind which the gypsies were encamped, and lying flat down, he snaked his way through the furze until he could see who they were that had baited the evening air with such a captivating odor.

When he saw that they were gypsies his heart leaped

up, and rising to his feet he went boldly to the camp.

Though they were an outcast race, by Scottish law, yet there was a glamour about the gypsy life, there was a pride of race and loyalty to the band, near akin to the Highlander's notions on these points. As a boy, John had wandered among their bands at the market fairs, ridden their ponies, admired their feats of skill and strength, and had not disdained to take a lesson from them, now and again.

He had picked up a few words of their strange jargon and was familiar with their boasted descent from old Scottish families, and knew the old proverb "Ye may gang through a' Egypt wi'out a pass"; which means generosity to the distressed who throw themselves on their kindness; faith kept at any cost with him who trusts them; and the passport to their friendship need only be a trinket given by a gypsy, or a few words of their wild lingo, or lacking these, a simple appeal to their protection.

If they were a proscribed race, he was a proscribed man. What better fate was in store for him than to cast in his lot with them, discard his tartan plaid, and don the leather apron of the tinkler.

As he came upon them, spent and weary with his wanderings, their camp looked homelike; so he went forward and won their good-will with his opening words:

"Ye are men o' Little Egypt. I hae kenned them in my ain land, and I ken 'The Tinklers are a' sib.' I am far frae my hame and am hunted by the king's men as a deserter, and I wad fain forego their near

acquaintance and enter the service o' the Lord and Earl o' Little Egypt."

His honest speech and evident necessities made instant appeal to the gypsy spirit; he had quoted one of their favorite proverbs, and called them by an honorable name; he was a recruit from King George's army to the service of the Lord and Earl of Little Egypt—all this opened their hearts to him instantly.

At that moment, had a detail of troopers come over the brow of the hill, armed with the king's warrant to take the body of John Gunn, they would have had to fight every man, woman, and boy of the Lochgellie band.

CHAPTER IV.

“A HORN SPOON HAUDS NAE POISON.”

AS fate would have it, John had fallen in with a section of the famous Lochgellie band. They prided themselves on their historic distinction and noble Egyptian ancestry, and denounced the great rival clan of the Baillies as “nothing better than thieves and vagabonds.” They owned a farm of forty acres of waste land, not far from the village of Lochgellie, on which they had built a cluster of huts, which were the winter quarters of the band, and a small foundry for casting plowshares and iron utensils; hence the settlement had received the name of “Little Carron.” The bleak heathy morasses and wide rushy wastes made this winter camp well-nigh inaccessible for the six months of the year during which they inhabited it.

The roving section of the band had been, during the winter, on a visit to their brethren at Yetholm, where, in a sequestered vale of the Cheviot Hills, was another very old settlement of Egyptians. Having made an excursion thence in the early spring, still farther southward in England, they were now on the return march to the north when John came upon them.

The chief of the band was old Andrew Faw, or Faa (as they preferred to have it spelled), who claimed

lineal descent from that famous John Faa, the "Lord and Earle of Little Egypt" with whom James V. in 1540 made a league, under writ of Privy Seal, granting unto this "Prince or Rajah" certain rights and powers of discipline and government over his own subjects. In view of the later proscriptive legislation of Scotland, the tribe had found it prudent to exchange their ancient family names for less distinctive patronymics; but, with true gypsy pride, they chose some of the best names of Scotland, and the Doneas, Fingos, Neyens, Fincos, and Beigies became Grahams, Stewarts, Robinsons, Jamiesons, Browns, and Ruthvens.

Andrew Faa ruled, with all the simplicity and effectiveness of the patriarchal system, over this restless band; while Elspeth, his wife, exercised a sway no less potent, by virtue of her gifts as a spawife. Indeed, had it come to an issue between them, there is little question that the unseen powers at her command would have enforced her authority, even in the face of the more substantial weapons of retribution in her husband's hands. The old chief himself was more in dread of Elspeth's vague and undetermined powers, than she was of the weight of her husband's cudgel.

This traveling section of the band was known as the "Scrapies," a name suggestive of the nature of their calling. Andrew always personally superintended their roving expeditions; they were the most important and delicate part of their calling, and it needed all the prudence and authority of the chief to direct and control them with judgment. To him the booty was brought, with an exact report of when and how

and from whom it was taken; upon his decision, from which there was no appeal, rested the division of the spoil among the plunderers and the reservation for their brethren in the winter camp.

Andrew and Elspeth had one daughter, Helen Faa, a wild, swarthy, black-haired girl of eighteen, with great, liquid eyes, like the waters of a mountain tarn, dark and deep, but full of flashing light when they are stirred. She was mobile and restless as a wandering breeze, and, like a deer, alert when seemingly at rest. There was a vein of quick and refined sensibility in her nature, the outcrop, perchance, of the gentle blood which the Faas boasted was mingled in their race from the famous "Gaberlunzie Man," as they called Scotland's eccentric king who played mad pranks disguised in a beggar's garb.

Helen was not their only child; her brother had been looked upon by all the tribe as the natural successor to the present chief. He was four years older than Helen, a type of the manly beauty for which their tribe was noted; tall, slim, of wiry and athletic build, with small hands and long tapering fingers, well shaped feet, with fine, delicate features and a restless, telling eye, he was certainly a handsome young fellow, with a high-bred air; and, whether it came from the Stuart blood or no, he had the gift of that ill-starred family to make men his devoted followers.

About two years before this, in a wayward spirit of rebellion at his father's strict rule, he had slipped away, in the night, to try his hand at a country fair. There was the usual accompaniment of such gatherings, a recruiting officer, and Willie Faa fell in with

him and listened to his tales of war and the splendors of army life, and, when drunk with the sergeant's liquor, took the "king's shilling" and enlisted. A short acquaintance with the drill of the raw recruits and the rigors of barrack life sufficed for this wild bird, and he started to leave the king's service as he had left his father's camp; but His Majesty had provided for such emergencies, and when at the sentry's call Willie declined to halt, he was shot and killed on the spot. They gave over the poor boy's body to the band from whose protection he had fled, and, with wild lamentations from old Elspeth and muttered curses from the rest of the band, they mourned for the darling of their tribe, and, besides their own strange funeral rites, secured Christian burial for the lad in the kirkyard of Lochgellie.

When the question arose as to John's admission to the band, old Andrew, while he knew that the power lay with him as patriarch, exercising both regal and priestly functions, to decide it; yet, lacking the prophetic gift, he retired with Elspeth to seek counsel of the fates; while the women gave John his supper in the camp.

Old Elspeth had been touched by John's appeal as no one else in the camp had felt it. He was the age of her own and only boy when he was taken from her, and it was, in some sort, a restitution when this fine young man was cast upon their mercy, a waif from that army which had ruined her hopes. The lack of gypsy blood did not lessen her interest in him; for she herself boasted of the Stuart blood in her veins and ascribed the grace and beauty of her wild fawn,

Helen, to the outcropping of this strain of gentle blood. Her mind was fairly made up when Andrew, stepping inside her tent, said:

"Aweel, spaewife, what hae ye to say anent yon stripling? Shall he bide?"

The cautious prophetess replied, "Ye ken him better than I; for ye hae seen him nigh hand, and I only frae afar."

"Aye," said Andrew, paying court to her Sybilline fame, "but ye can see frae afar, and ken what was and what is and what shall be."

"What was," answered Elspeth, in the low monotone which she assumed when the prophetic mood came over her, "is already come to pass, and none can mak' it ither; what is, every man kens wha has his e'en open; what is to be, the Lord and Earl o' Little Egypt has power to say; and we wha own his rule maun aye submit."

This portentous tone always overawed Andrew. Her face became set, her eyes, dull and lusterless, seemed to retire within their sockets, and her voice had a deep, uncanny resonance.

"But ye ken weel eneuch, spaewife, that the Lord o' Little Egypt winna set his face agen the powers wha rule the affairs o' men, and wad fain ask frae them whether the comin' o' this man will be for the weal or woe o' the band," said Andrew, sure that he had cornered the prophetess.

"It is aye well for a band when the chief can trust everyone, and woe for a band when there is ane in it wha he doubts," answered the fendy Elspeth, deter-

mined to discover Andrew's wish, and to make it the father of her thought.

"The chief o' a band can aye trust the man wham the higher powers hae sent," said the wary old chief.

Elsbeth paused and with the lean forefinger of her right hand, in mysterious silence, traced the lines of her left palm; then, rocking herself to and fro, in a crooning tone, as to an unseen presence, she began, while Andrew, awed into silence, listened to the prophetic utterance.

"The wild bird had bigged her nest on the edge o' the moor and brooded owre her nestlin's till they were fine grown, and the young bird was a hawk on the wing; but the hunter trappit it, and he was shot as he fled frae the snare, and the wee ane was left alone.

"There cam' to the nest, 'twixt mirk and gloamin', a braw eaglet wha had broken the snare, weary and spent he cam' and askit, Is there place for me? He cam' frae the south where the saft winds blaw and melt the ice and snaw and gar the waters rin again."

There were great teardrops in her eyes; Andrew began to understand the parable, and gave a sigh, half of compassion, half of defiance.

"Elsbeth," he said; she was now the mother of his boy, "I ken; but what say the fates?"

She recked not of the fates; the mother had gotten the victory over the prophetess.

"I ken naught what the fates say," she cried, in a frenzied voice. "They say to me, Spaewife, follow thy heart! They say to me, as I say to you, Andrew

Faa, when was it e'er a token o' guid luck for a band of Egyptians (wha are naught but wanderers on the face o' the earth) to turn the homeless frae their tents? When was there e'er guid luck in the gold, or guid cheer in the food, ta'en frae the puir or the widow or the faitherless? And, gin ye let this chiefl gae to be ta'en and shot as my laddie was shot, then the blude o' baith will be on your hands. I can spae that—it is comin'—I see it noo—there is blude, there is blude—it rins down frae your hands—it is risin'—aye, it rises fast—ye are standin' knee-deep in the red flood—it will soon rin owre your head—speak, man, speak quick, I tell ye, and say, I tak' this wanderer to be my son and brother—speak it; and see if the red tide falls."

She rose in an ecstasy and pointed, through the tent-flap, to the sunset sky suffused with a blood-red color; and old Andrew, under the spell of her wild invocation, gave the required pledge. After he had spoken, she stood watching the sky intently, while the evening wind made the leaves sigh softly.

"The tide falls," at last she said, with solemn exultation. "The blude is fadin', and I see gold in plenty." Sure enough the crimson had turned to gold. The prophetess sank on the floor; and the mother's tears fell soft as the summer rain. Andrew stood for a few moments looking at her, in awe-stricken silence, and then tiptoed out of the tent.

He saw John Gunn, the center of a group of gypsy men who were drinking in his story of the short life of the Black Watch; and it pleased Andrew to see that he stood taller, by a head, than any of the men about

him; and his heart went out toward this youth, with the yearnings of a strong nature giving vent to a feeling long repressed.

He came near the group, and, with a tone of authority, none the less emphatic because of the slight tremor, said:

"I hae spiered o' the fates what their will is; and Queen Elspeth has had a vision anent this lad; and gin we let him gae, I maun wade to my chin in blude, and gin he bides wi' us, there is a sight o' gold. He has ta'en our salt and told us his story, puttin' his life in our hands; and, for the honor o' Little Egypt, let us see that he loses it only when there is nane o' us to stand by him.

"John Faa," he said, turning to John; "for by this name we will call thee, I gie thee the hilt o' a dagger which was worn by John Faa o' great fame; and this night we will tak' thee, wi' feastin' and dancin', into the service o' the Lord and Earl o' Little Egypt."

John dropped on one knee before the old chief, kissed the blade of the dagger, and, as he rose, thrust it into his belt.

Outside the group stood Helen Faa, and John caught a flash of light from her dark eyes, full of wonder at the strange scene, and they thrilled him.

The band were no ways loath to accept this conclusion of the adventure, for when will a gypsy forego the chance of feasting and good cheer. So one after another came forward with some token for John; it mattered not if it were only a button cut from their jacket, it bound them as companions in arms for life,

or until the return of the gift annulled the compact. He was assigned a tent with three other men of the band, and the more effectually to identify him with his new-found friends, old Elspeth came out of her tent, and, with great ceremony and muttered incantations, anointed his hands, neck, and face with a dark brown stain, which, with his previous weather bronzing, gave him a true gypsy tinge; but she could not change the tint of his clear blue eyes.

They provided him with the ordinary ragged outfit of the gypsy, the long leathern apron and the tools of the horner's and tinkler's trade, and also furnished him, from their stores, with three complete outfits of gentleman's attire, in any one of which it would be hard to recognize the man whom you had met but a half hour before.

The costume for state occasions, like the present, was gorgeous with all the splendor of color and rich adornment which the gypsy loves. There was a white wig, a soft broad-brimmed hat with a white plume, a shirt ruffed at the front and trimmed on the cuffs with fine lace, a scarlet waistcoat and breeches, white stockings, shoes with silver buckles, and a long green velvet coat trimmed with white fur, with a single row of large pearl buttons down the front.

In costume of similar magnificence all the gypsy men were arrayed; but Andrew and John alone wore the white cockade. The women wore short red, green, or blue petticoats reaching a little below the knee, with a fine show of gold and silver bangles, earrings, necklaces, and brooches, with white kerchiefs, and silk or satin bodices.

The children, in their scarlet or green dresses and with bangles and earrings, looked like brownies come to disport themselves on the surface and display some of their hoarded wealth.

The camp was lit with four fires, placed north, south, east, and west, to "purify the wind from every airt" and shed radiance on the festivities, which were opened with a stoup of strong home-brewed ale, a contribution from the last farmhouse honored by their visitation; after the ale a judicious portion of some smuggled Holland gin was administered, under Andrew's strict supervision; enough to quicken, not retard, their activity as dancers.

Andrew and Elspeth, with John between them, took their seat in the middle of the large ring inclosed by the four fires; the rest of the band flung themselves on the ground, in small groups, on the outer edge of the circle.

Tom Ruthven brought out his fiddle and struck up the old tune of "The Hunts of Cheviot." Out from the surrounding darkness came Jamie Stewart, wielding his stout oak cudgel, and, taking his stand in the center, with a deep, guttural "Hoogh! Hoogh!" summoned four of the gypsy girls, Posie Nansie, Racer Jess, Bouncer Jean, and Helen, who had no nickname.

They stood in front of the four fires, poised lightly, with their bare ankles, bedecked with gold anklets, showing beneath their short silk and velvet skirts. With their arms akimbo on their hips, the firelight glittering in their dark eyes, they swayed softly to and fro, as if rocked by the wind in rhythm with the music.

Jamie Stewart, with his cudgel now whirling in his hands, now flying twenty feet in the air, but never once touching the ground, went through the wild measures of the gypsy national dance, the counterpart of the Highland fling and the fisher's hornpipe; but never did Highlander or fisher so leap, and bound, and writhe, and twist, and flash like a beam of swarthy light, as did the lithe and tireless son of this strange race.

When this first movement was ended, at a sign from Jamie, the dark statues, which had swayed to the rhythm of his dance, were drawn toward him, as he faced each one and plied his cudgel with blows so swift and strong that they seemed unavoidable.

Lightly the girls tripped toward him, as though drawn by magnetism in among the whirling strokes, until they seemed to be enveloped in a maze of flying oaken sticks—they came as the tide comes, steady and swift, then ebbed away from him with an easy motion, and stood swaying to the music as though they had not stirred.

John looked on in amazement. He thought that he knew the gypsies; but he had never seen anything like this. The swift whirl stirred his blood, until it was Helen Faa's turn to be drawn into the whirlwind of blows, any one of which, as the wind of it stirred her dark tresses, if it fell a hair's breadth closer, would lay her a corpse at his feet—then John did not like the sport and wished it would end.

The dance ended in a whirl of swift and intricate figures; and, in the indistinguishable throng, ever and anon, John saw the firelight glisten in the eyes of

Helen Faa. Into this closing dance the whole band was gradually drawn; while the three sat in the center with Jamie's cudgel flying now over their heads, and again over the heads and among the dancers. If any flagged the cudgel was the baton with which Jamie gave the laggard stout encouragement.

As the night wore on Elspeth sat watching the stars; for, when Sirius was in the ascendant, the waters of the Nile rose in Egypt and, in the home of their fathers, divine honors were paid to him; and therefore under this star Elspeth always prophesied.

At a sign from her they ceased dancing, and gathered in a group near the center. Elspeth took a silver cup full of a decoction of her own brewing, stale seawater in which bitter herbs were steeped, and a drop of blood from Andrew's little finger to give it the greater virtue. She muttered, in the gypsy tongue, while she sprinkled John on the right arm, breast, and forehead, and gave him the rest of the decoction to drink. It was unpalatable stuff; but John drank it bravely.

Then Elspeth kissed him on the eyes, hung a silver sixpence of a lucky date around his neck, and gravely saluted him as "Been Rajah." One by one the band came forward, shook him by the hand, and welcomed him into their fellowship with the salute "Beenship daves Nawken" (Good-day to you, gypsy).

Helen Faa came last of all, and John felt the thrill of her warm, strong hand as it lingered in his for a moment. John knew, after this ceremony, that he

was a gypsy, but did not know that the queen of the gypsies had put him in the direct line of succession, as a Rajah eligible to the chieftainship of the band.

To crown the festival a stoup of the "mountain dew" was called for; and, after this, the revel ran high in honor of their adopted brother.

The cudgel was now in old Andrew's hands, who drank sparingly, and used his wand of power without stint to check the brawls of the women as well as the men, and gave them reason to remember his reproofs after they were well over the effects of their potations.

John received his first lesson in the rude but effective discipline of the Lords of Little Egypt, which went on the old time principle of sparing not the rod.

John noted that Andrew, Elspeth, and Helen kept aloof from the revel, and thought to himself, "Aye, even among these Lords o' the Fens and Moors, guid blude will haud its ain place. The lass will aye bide a princess, gin she live in ha' or hovel," and it was a pleasant thought.

The progress of the band was now northward, through Westmoreland and Cumberland, over the Solway, through Dumfries and Lanark to Linlithgow, and so, across the Forth, to Lochgellie.

There they were to tarry, for a week or so, to make ready their outfit for the summer tour, northward through Fife and Forfar to the romantic region of Braemar in Aberdeenshire. Here at the foot of old Cairngorm, in the forest of Glen Avon, was a favorite summer camping ground, from which they sent out small parties to attend the summer fairs. Beside the

camp ran the clear flowing Avon, of which the old proverb says:

The water of A'an it rins sae clear
'Twould beguile a man o' a hunder year.

And of the glen a queen writes: "It is a solitude at once so wild, so solemn, so serene, so sweet."

On this northward march John was doomed to an inactive life, for it was deemed best for him to remain in camp, and even retire to a tent on the approach of any stranger. For prudence is the gypsy's stronghold, and his cue is to shun all conflict with the powers that be.

There remained for the active spirit of John no more exciting occupation than to become an adept in the tinkler's art of mending and the horner's trade of fashioning and polishing the spoons and other utensils of this handicraft.

The monotony of this life was relieved by the sports, which, in the evening, were inaugurated by the young men for their own practice and for the amusement of the women. In these John acquitted himself to the satisfaction of his friends. At wrestling, putting the stone, throwing the hammer, and golf, none could count on winning when John was among the contestants, and he slung the gypsy men in a way to make them wary how they grappled with him. Where mere strength was concerned John had not his peer in the band, but many of them were more quick of hand and foot than he. He soon won a place of honor among this band of athletic young men; but it was Helen's smile of applause for which John

watched; and, as he laid one after another of the stalwart young gypsies on the sward, they were trophies cast at Helen's feet.

She was often his tutor at the horner's trade, which is the women's work; and as she taught him to polish the rough horn spoons a careless touch of her hand would thrill him, or leaning over his shoulder with merry chiding of his awkwardness, her warm breath against his cheek, or the touch of a wandering tress, would set his pulse beating such a tattoo as made him clumsier than ever. Her merriment increased his confusion and the spell of her beauty grew more enchanting, as her dark eyes glowed and her white teeth shone between her parted lips; and John found the apprenticeship to the horner's trade the bonniest thing a man could be put at.

No wonder that, with plenty of spare time on his hands, and thrown upon his own resources, John should fill up some measure of that time sitting, in the spring days, under the hedgerows, well apart from the camp, and pour into the willing ears of Helen Faa the tale of his adventurous life; nor was it strange that she loved to listen and that John became a hero in her eyes.

They were sitting thus one evening, on the edge of a meadow, a mile away from camp; the even-song of the birds and the murmur of the brook attuned John's heart to thoughts of love. The sun had dropped behind the Ochil Hills, and they swam in a purple haze, outlined against a daffodil sky. John had been repeating the story of his boyhood, his enlistment, and his short but stirring military life, Helen, with unflag-

ging interest, following the adventures of her hero, when John, turning to her, said:

"But I mind me aye o' my Highland hame, o' its hills that were braw, and the bonnie burn that wimpled down the glen; where I ken ilka path and stane. I can see it noo, the wee hut wi' the byre beside it, my ain sma' cot under the leaves where the mornin' sun keekit in and wauked me to look out owre the glen asleep under the early mist. Ah! it was bonnie. And ye hae nae hame to remember, Helen?" he said in a tone of gentle pity.

"I was born on the edge o' a meadow like this, under a hawthorn hedge, wi' the broad blue sky for a roof, where I needed nae window to see the sun, and the hame o' the bird is mine—the free, open air," answered Helen.

"Aye! but a man's heart clings to his birthplace, and the wide world is an unco' big house for siccan sma' creatures as we," replied John.

"I was born as the fallow deer are born, where the hawthorn blossoms are sweet and the crimson tips of the daisies are scattered in the meadow; my cradle was the sweet fern, and I was bathed in the clear, cold burn; and I know and love my birthplace as the deer love theirs; and it is not a bit of ground shut in by hard stone walls, but the broad Scots land; and every hillside is my hame," answered Helen proudly.

John marveled at the wayward spirit of this untamed creature, that resisted the thought of a pent-up house even as a shelter for her babyhood.

"Do you ken what it is for the heart to rest on ane place or thing?" said John, with a sort of despair of

finding any common ground between this wild fawn and himself.

"I ken what it is to love the trees and the gowans, the rocks and the hills, and the wild deer as they leap," said Helen, in an exultant tone.

"Aye! but they are a kittle lot. We catch a glint o' them as they skit by; but they arena a thing to set ane's heart on," and John thought, as he said it, that his words belied the motions of his own heart.

"Helen," he continued, "ye hae listened aftwhiles to my story, and I hae been connin' anither tale in the glint o' your sun-bright e'en. I ken what it is to love summat besides rocks and trees and fallow deer," and he reached out his hand and took hers, while she sat, in uncertain wonder, neither resisting nor responding to his overtures. Her soft, dark hand, with its taper fingers, lay clasped in his; she did not seem to mind it, but waited for what he would say next. John did not know what to say, and hence, as often happens, said the honest truth, in the most direct way.

"Helen, I love ye, as man can only love a woman. With my whole heart I love ye." He paused for an answer but none came. Her face was full of gladness as she looked him in the eye without blushing, her hand resting in his, but she uttered not a word. "Helen," he said, releasing her hand that he might clasp her waist, "Helen, will ye be my ain wife?" She opened her eyes wide, leaped to her feet, burst through the hedge and bounded away like a deer. It was all so sudden that John was left with outstretched arm and his lips ready for a kiss, and nought but the

evening air to receive his embraces. Had she given him a stout blow on the head with a cudgel, it would not have left him so completely dazed.

He sat for a few moments thinking it all over; he knew the ways of many a wild creature, but this one was past finding out; then he rose, sadder but no wiser, and walked slowly home.

As he drew near the camp, he caught a glimpse of Helen, behind a tent, looking for his return and furtively watching his every movement; and he was sorely puzzled.

That evening, at the wrestling match, there was a brawl growing out of a dispute between two of the young fellows as to whether the fall was a fair one; and quick as thought the quarrel spread until a free fight was in progress, the women meanwhile screaming encouragement to one party or the other and the whole camp in a pother of wild excitement. Into the *mêlée* strode John Gunn, and with a stout oak cudgel was cooling the ardor of one and another of the combatants by well-directed blows, when one, more frantic than the rest, struck John a blow with his poniard, which, glancing from his cheek, drove the point of the blade into his shoulder and laid open a wound from which the blood flowed freely, and, at the same moment, a swinging blow from a cudgel on the other side laid him senseless on the grass.

Helen, who was watching, with glowing eyes and parted lips, the noisy fracas, gave one piercing scream as she saw John fall, and, rushing into the midst of the combat, threw herself upon him, spreading out her arms to shield him. This stopped the fight, and

the rioters drew off to one side, leaving Helen cowering over John.

Then was love born in the heart of this gypsy maiden, and while she moaned over him as lost, he won her, without word or look, to a love that was fierce and wild, but strong as death.

John was severely wounded and lost blood enough to weaken him for several days. Old Elspeth ministered to him with her rough leechcraft, stanching the flow of blood with a poultice of vinegar and salt, the sting of which had the virtue of a quick restorative.

During these days of weakness, when John sat listlessly about the camp, or lay stretched on the sward, feeling giddy and helpless, Helen hung about him like a faithful collie, watched him with wistful looks, ran to fetch him fresh water from the spring, shaded his eyes from the sun or fanned him with a branch of leafy birch when he slept, and, in every way in which she could mutely testify her love, made John glad.

It was too delightful to have her thus ministering to every want for John to dare risk this happiness by any word of love, but his eyes were brimful of the tender passion.

One evening, as he lay stretched on the grass with Helen sitting by his side, he spoke of the riot, how his head swam and his eyes grew dim, "And in the midst o' it, I woke half-way and had a blink o' joy sae sweet that I thocht I was in heaven, and an angel was hangin' owre me wi' outstretchit arms to shield me frae demons fightin' around me. And I wadna ken to choose, Helen, whether it isna bonnier to dee wi' sic a vision o' ane you love cowerin' o'er ye, than to live

and see her rin frae ye like a frichtened deer." He closed his eyes and lay there ashen pale, in the fading light of the gloaming, as if about to realize his wish, and take his last look on life in the eyes of the woman he loved.

It was no stroke of art on honest John's part; but he could not have played to his audience better. Helen threw her arms about his neck, pressed her warm lips to his, and made passionate appeal to him to come back and bide with her. "I will be your wife, John. I will love you better than the wild deer loves the forest, or the laverock the morning air. I will follow you, John, as the bee follows the scent o' the wild thyme. I will live for ye, die for ye, and when they mak' your grave will be buried at your feet. O John! ye winna gang awa', but bide wi' your ain Helen."

Never was cordial distilled by human art, pressed to the lips of the dying, that wrought with such quick potency as did the kisses of the lovely Egyptian on the prostrate form of John Gunn. He rose up with the color mounting to his face, his heart beat high, he clasped her in his arms and gave back her life-giving kisses, with a power which had no suggestion of the fainting creature of a few moments before.

Helen was proud of the strength with which he held her. It was masterful, making her feel that she was his, and she gloried in being bound in such bonds, and was glad to feel that the fetters were stringent. After this she gave herself up to making John realize that she was his, and that no service was too constant or exacting to testify her devotion to him.

Camp life was no longer irksome, for Helen was full of pretty devices to pass the time and make John feel that life with her was not a weariness. She sang in a sweet, wild way, strumming a guitar in a simple accompaniment. She taught the children dances for John's amusement; she could recite many a Border ballad and had a fund of gypsy tales picked up in their wanderings, and was well versed in the lore of their tribes. But above all there was herself, quick and variable as the light of a summer's day on the ocean, now blue as the skies above it, now green with its own emerald tint, anon purple with the flitting of the cloud shadows over it, then white with the freshening breeze—changeable but constant, and, in all moods, still lovely to the eye.

They went, on the next day, to old Andrew Faa and told him that they had plighted their troth; he blessed them, with the air of a patriarch, and sent them to Elspeth that she might “dower them wi’ guid luck”; and she, nothing loath, loaded them with prophetic riches.

The marriage, so far as the gypsy rite was concerned, was the simple announcement to the assembled band by old Andrew that John and Helen Faa, who stood in sight of them all, had chosen one another as husband and wife, and, in order that the law of the land might recognize them as such, they would be wedded by a minister of the Scottish Kirk. This was done at the county town of Cupar; after which a levy was made on Andrew's store of strong liquors. Thus was forged another link in the chain that bound

together the fortunes of John Gunn and the Lochgellic band.

During their further journey northward their life was varied with few adventures, for they were pressing steadily on, to be in season for the summer fairs, where the gypsy's harvest is reaped.

John watched with lively interest the training of the children to be quick of eye and deft of hand. He soon learned that, according to the gypsy code, the great crime was, being found out. Nor was this so far away from the old law of the Border, where disgrace attached, not to the laird who had fitted out a predatory excursion, but to him who failed in carrying it to a successful issue.

He watched the brown youngsters as they were put upon their mettle to acquire a light and easy touch. A pair of breeches were suspended on a cord stretched between two poles; on these a bell was hung and in one of the pockets a small coin was hidden. If, without ringing the bell, the deft youngster could search the pockets and extract the coin, the sixpence was his reward; but if the bell were rung the reward was meted out to him with a birch rod.

This exercise was varied by laying a coin in open sight of all the family, to be taken without detection, under the same system of reward and punishment.

By the time they reached Braemar, John had a pretty fair insight into gypsy life, and the training, government, and discipline of the band. He found them true to their word; just and generous where friends were concerned; implacable in avenging an

injury; ready to help the friendless and often lavish to the poor, but always prepared to levy on the rich; believing that the world owed them a living and that they must not be too scrupulous in collecting the tribute.

As for their religion—it was like that of some other people, hard to find.

CHAPTER V.

“REMEMBER, MAN, AND KEEP IN MIND,
A FAITHFU’ FRIEND IS HARD TO FIND.”

SHORTLY after they were settled in their camp at Braemar, old Andrew died, and, under Elspeth’s potent influence, John was chosen as his successor; not without strong opposition, however, and the kindling of bitter jealousies.

Jamie Stewart, the master of the revels, aspired to rule more than the dances of the band, and, as some surmised, bore John no good-will for carrying off Helen Faa before his eyes. Whether this infused venom into his spite or no, certain it was that he bore John a grudge, and took every opportunity to show the cloven foot, and to fan any smoldering discontent among the others.

John saw and felt this very quickly, and watched his chance to force an issue where he could assert and maintain, or forfeit, his place as chief of the tribe.

They had buried old Andrew in the quiet kirkyard of Invergowan, where he would be in goodly company with many an old family name.

At the request of John, the Rev. Gordon McDonald had come to the dying chief. It was with some difficulty that John had persuaded Elspeth that it could do Andrew no harm to see the minister.

“He can tell him summat o’ the world where he

must gang when he quits this. There is a river to cross; and he kens the ford o' the stream," said John, suggesting such practical features as would give Elspeth a notion of the value of Christian counsel in view of a journey to the other world.

"Has he been in Egypt; and does he ken when the Nile rises and fa's?" queried Elspeth, dubious still of his merits as a guide to the unknown land of her forefathers.

"He has traveled far and wide, I ken; and his Bible tells o' the land o' Egypt in ancient days," said John.

"Weel, aweel, gang ye and fetch him, while I tie a witch-knot in Andrew's hair and brew some broth that will be a spell agen any cantrips o' the parson;" and she went into the tent and prepared the old man to meet the minister's bogies scatheless.

John found Mr. McDonald in the study of his manse, near the gray old church. His study windows looked on the churchyard, and beyond to the quiet meadow bordered with birches, over the tops of which peeped, here and there, the roofs of the long, straggling village. The peace and quiet of the scene were often woven into the minister's sermons, who read his Master's teachings not only in his word, but in his works, and in the lives of his fellow-men.

John had his misgivings, as he entered the garden gate, as he recalled the description which old Sandy Brown, the sexton and minister's man, had given him of what a grand man the minister was at the doctrines.

"He is aye keen to scent a heretic as a hound at a hare, and uncommon zeelyous for the five cardinal

points. It wad do ye guid, man, to hear him flay a heretic; ye couldna pyke your teeth wi' the bits that are left. And he doesna merely splinter him to pieces, he fairly grinds him to powder and wi' ane mighty breath blows the dust o' him to every airt. Oh! it is grand, man."

John bethought him of these glowing descriptions of the minister's disintegrating power on heretics, and his heart misgave him as to the fate of a gypsy chief at the hands of such a stanch defender of the Presbyterian faith and order.

But he was never afraid to face a man on an honest errand, and so he went up to the study door and knocked.

"Come ben," said a hearty voice, whose tone was a welcome.

He found the minister with his eyes a-twinkle over a letter he was writing, whose margin was enlivened with comic pictures from his facile pen, taking the place of pages of description.

"Weel, my guid friend, how can I serve ye the day?" and his broad face, fringed round with whiskers, but clean shaven on the cheeks and upper lip, beamed kindly on John; and the smile on his full round lips endorsed his tone of welcome. John felt at home immediately.

"I hae come on an errand which, mayhap, it winna please ye to undertake," said John.

"I am bidden by my Master to serve a' men as I hae opportunity," said the minister. "But what may this uncanny errand be?"

"Aye, I fear me ye may ca' it uncanny, when I tell

ye that it is to minister religion to a dying gypsy chief," said John.

"Na, freend, I ca' that guid wark; and I will gae to it right willingly," was the minister's hearty response.

"But ye'll not find the man sicker on the doctrines o' grace," said John, feeling his way. "I doubt whether ye'll find him sure that there be ony God at all, to whom we can pray."

"Then, freend, let us hurry to him before it is too late to tell him o' these things. We ministers maun aye bide firm in the path o' truth, or we maun lead the hale hirsell astray; but our hearts arena shut against the strayin' ones wha canna see as we see. I carena whether a man kens God or no; if so be that he wad find him, then I am wi' him. I wad fain mak' him see as I do, but if he canna, then I will gae wi' him as far as we can gae thegither, and trust that our paths will meet beyond. Let us gae to your gypsy freend, and I'll tell him about the Saviour wha didna require that men should ken God, but that they should want to ken him. I will tell him the story o' the thief on the cross, and hoo the Lord said: 'They that are weel need nae doctor, but only the sick folk.'"

So John led him to the gypsy tents, and the gentle-hearted minister offered the dying chief such consolation and instruction as his dim notions of religion enabled him to receive.

Perhaps his ardent wish made him so sure that his message of peace did find its way to the murky recesses of old Andrew's fading consciousness.

But there was no question that he gave the old chief Christian burial; and the tribe held a lyke-wake for him, after their own wild fashion.

When the seven days' mourning was ended an election was held, and John was chosen chief, under old Elspeth's dominant influence, which some of the men were inclined to resent, yet not to the point of braving her power and putting the tribe under the spaewife's ban.

Jamie Stewart, who voiced the discontent by which he hoped to profit, took occasion, a few days later, to impugn the allotment of the spoil from one of their forays.

Turning to John his swarthy face dark with suppressed rage, "Ye ken weel to feather your ain nest wi' a double portion, pickin' frae the rest and makin' ready for the time when ye'll grab a' the meat and gar us lick the banes."

"Jamie Stewart," said John quietly, "no man is free to say that I'm not fair in dealin' wi' ye a'. Ye can mak' guid your words, or ye can tak' them back into your fause mouth." John spoke in a tone that would not brook evasion.

Jamie, nothing loath, took up the wager of battle. "I'll mak' them guid, and the band shall see which is fause, you or me. Haena ye waled ane portion for yoursel' and anither for auld Elspeth, and doesna every man ken that ye are ane family, and ane portion is your due, as to a' the rest; and ye tak' twa?"

"For this ye tell me I'm not fair in partin' the spoil? Hae ye clean forgot the years when Andrew Faa was leader o' this band? Do ye mind the time

when ane, Jamie Stewart, wasna sae deft o' hand but that he was caught in the act o' thievin' and caged in Linlithgow tolbooth, wi' a short shrift before him; and Elspeth Faa went into the prison, wi' a rope braided in her hair, and a man named Andrew Faa waited under the wall wi' a horse, on which he set this carle Jamie, and himsel' trusted to his ain stout legs? Gin ye arena leal to a fallen chief, ye maun remember hoo these twa saved your thankless neck frae the tether, or ye hae nae right to be ca'd an Egyptian, but only a thief and a vagabond."

A smile went round the band as John laid bare the mean spirit of his adversary, while the scowl grew blacker on Jamie's face.

"I winna let sic words pass the lips o' a foundlin' that cam' as a beggar amang us, not lang syne," said Jamie furiously.

"Such words will aye pass my lips when ony man plays the part o' a coward and forgets what belongs to the dead," answered John, looking the furious gypsy calmly in the eye.

As Jamie sprang forward a step, John went to meet him. The rest of the band stood breathless, while Elspeth and Helen, drawn from their tents by Jamie's loud voice, watched like tigresses the outcome of the affair.

"Jamie Stewart, ye may gang to your tent," said John sternly.

"I winna stir a step for a Hieland beggar!" screamed Jamie.

Quick as a flash fell John's blow, with the cudgel he had seized; but not quick enough to catch the

wary young fellow, who swerved aside; and, as John lunged forward with the impetus of his aimless stroke, Jamie's ringing blow came down athwart his shoulders, almost felling him to the ground.

Then the play of quarter-staff began in real earnest.

Jamie's blows were swift and sure, but John was stanch to meet them, and kept the vantage of a cool head. He wasted no more strength in cudgeling at Jamie, but gave himself wholly to parrying the gypsy's furious onset. At last, maddened beyond all caution, Jamie rushed in, hurling a storm of blows at close quarter, and, becoming more unwary as his foe seemed inclined to retreat, pressed closer, when suddenly John flung down his cudgel, and rushing in on Jamie, clasped him round the waist and raising him high in the air dashed him heavily to the ground, where he lay limp and unconscious at John's feet.

As John turned from his fallen foe, how Helen's eyes glowed on him. Without another look at Jamie's prostrate form, John went on with the distribution of the spoil, allotting to Jamie his full share, and bidding them take it to his tent, whither they had carried him.

There was no further question of the justness of the distribution.

When John went to his own tent Helen flung her arms about his neck, and, with glowing kisses, bore her testimony to his prowess.

But, though John had shown his ability to assert and defend the prerogatives of his place against all gainsayers, yet Helen warned him that he had not heard the last of this, and begged him to be on his

guard; which John set down to a woman's horror at the sight of a little blood.

But Helen knew the temper of the men with whom she was allied by birth and lineage better than John did; she knew that Jamie's sullen looks betokened not the spirit of an honest man who, being fairly beaten, respects the prowess of the victor. And so, while John slept, she was alert, and her quick ear caught the sound of stealthy steps creeping upon their tent, but two nights after this affair.

It was just past midnight, and the moon was dropping out of sight behind the crest of Cairngorm, when her wakeful ear caught the sound, outside their tent. She had barely time to throw aside her sleeping babe and step forward, when the tent flap was pushed aside and Jamie Stewart crept in, like a slow reptile, worming his way toward the cot where John lay sleeping. Helen, who stood beside the opening, saw, by the dim moonlight, the gleam of a poniard in his hand, and, quick as thought, she raised the dagger, which she kept under her pillow, and plunged it, with strength begotten of fear and love, into the back of the writhing serpent. With a muttered groan and curse he fell to the ground, while a warm stream ran down on Helen's feet, making her shiver.

The groan of the wounded gypsy half wakened John, and roused the child, who cried lustily. John muttered drowsily, "Helen, what ails the bairn?"

"It greets for the bield o' its faither's arm frae the night wind," said Helen quickly. "Tak' it and hap it warm, John."

"It aye lo'es better to cuddle in your saft bosom,

than on my brawny arm. Canna ye stop the lam-mie's bleatin'?"

"I maun gang to the burn and scour my feet," said Helen evasively.

"But why maun ye souse your feet in the burn at this hour o' night. It isna a canny time; ye maun fa' foul o' the kelpie, and I winna leave ye to gang alane. What ails your feet that ye maun scour them?" said John, now thoroughly roused.

"I hae killed a viper in the tent door and his blude rins owre my feet."

"But a viper hasna blude enech to rin owre the ground like that. It will be some ither beastie. We will look to it," and John stirred himself to rise.

"Na! na! John, bide ye still," said Helen, who was fain to bear all the responsibility of this deed herself, nor let it be said that John had come among them to shed gypsy blood. "Do ye mind the bairnie, and I'll look to this beastie," and she caught Jamie by the heels and drew him forth from the tent.

By this time old Elspeth, in the next tent, was roused and came creeping forth, with the hood of her long cloak over her head, looking, in the darkness, the ideal witch.

Between them they dragged Jamie into her tent, and Helen, hastily wiping the blood from her feet, and sprinkling some loose earth on the floor of their tent as she went in, took the baby from John, bidding him talk no more for fear of waking the child, and lay down; but not to sleep.

Old Elspeth, in her rude fashion, stanchd the blood from Jamie's wound and gave him a dram of whisky

which revived the fainting man. Then, pale and weak as he was from the shock and loss of blood, old Elspeth hung over him and muttered in a gruesome whisper: "I wad gie ye to ken, Jamie Stewart, that the life o' John Faa is a charmed life. When he was taen into the band and gien that name I cast a spell about him, and wha plots to do him harm canna do it in secret. So lang as there is ane wha loves him, to her it will be gien to see the thoughts o' him wha plots, and to ken the hour and way that he will try to do him ill. Ye hae been struck, to-night, by nae human hand, but by a blow frae old Andrew Faa himsel'. I was ware o' his wraith sittin' in my tent door, and he sadly shook his head when I spiered o' him wherefore he couldna rest. When ye crawled past my tent, old Andrew's wraith rose up, wi' his dagger in his hand, and passed before ye into John's tent. I saw it a' by the elfin light, which only the spaewife can see. Now is your last chance. Twice may a man lift hand agen John Faa and be spared; but the third time, it will be death to him. For I hae tied nine witch-knots in his hair that the deil himsel' canna untie, and, gin ye raise your hand on him again, the wan-weird witch o' Cawdor will bide wi' ye in the mirk o' midnight and suck the breath o' your saul frae your mouth, and when ye hae gasped out your life and are come, through the glen o' the demons, to the land o' our forbears, the wraith o' old Andrew will meet ye glowerin', and will set ye a tale o' wark that'll ne'er be done, wi' the demons for your task-maisters, and will mak' a' the days o' your ither life waukrife and weary, and ye'll never hae rest."

Poor Jamie, just roused from his fainting stupor, not knowing where he was, hearing the eldritch voice, unfamiliar in the darkness, reading out to him such a doom, got a lesson more impressive than the point of Helen's dagger to make him realize the folly of trying to harm him whom the fates were shielding.

During the next week they attended the fair at Kintore. There was the usual array of cattle, horses, sheep, and country produce, with peddlers from the towns. The noisy bustle of the fair was at its height, a mingled chorus of lowing kine and bleating sheep, with, here and there, an unusual stir made by the charge of an angry bull who had broken from the herd, with a dozen or more farmers and their gillies at his heels adding their shouts to the din; the flocks of sheep shifting hither and thither like snowdrifts, with the serious collies on their flanks; the noisy tents where the bargains were sealed with a drop of the "mountain dew"; and through all these the gypsy men were roving, like the collies, watching their opportunity, and finding it, from time to time, as was attested by the loud outcry of some farmer when he found that his money was gone, and he must forego his purchase or make shift to borrow from his neighbors.

On the outskirts of the fair sat the farmers' wives or daughters beside a tethered cow and calf or minding a hirsle of sheep, while the gudeman drove his bargains and visited the tents. Among these the gypsy women passed to and fro, telling fortunes for the maidens, and picking up a trifle for minding the cattle, and selling their horn spoons.

The Laird of Stoneywold had come over to the fair to buy a stock of cattle and ponies for his new estate, and, as fate would have it, fell in with John Gunn. With a party of gay gentlemen he had been making merry at the inn, when John came up leading a pair of shaggy-coated, stout-limbed ponies, which he had been commissioned to sell.

"Ha! blue-eyed tinkler," said the jovial Laird, "I'll wager ye hae twa beasties for sale at a ready price, so that ye be rid o' them e'er the owner finds them on your hands."

"Aye! my Laird, ye hae spoken truth, whether it be that your cups brought it out o' ye, or your fine judgment o' a man, at sight," answered John readily.

"Ye hae a bonnie keen wit, but gin ye wad mend your manners ye wadna hurt your trade," said Muir, not relishing that a gypsy should put himself on common ground with a laird.

"For the maist part I tak' the cue o' my manners frae the company I'm in," said John quietly.

"Ye maun keep rather low company then," retorted Muir hotly.

"I'll leave that for you to say, my Laird, sin' I never saw your face till this hour," replied John, more amused than angry.

"You're a gash caird, and unco fou' o' gumption; but ye hae summat to learn anent your standin' before gentlemen," said Muir. "It ill becomes a man o' your station to tell a gentleman that he speaks the truth because he is in his cups."

"And it wasna a fine pattern o' speech that ye set me yoursel', my Laird, when ye told me the ponies

were stolen gear in my hands," answered John stoutly. "Gin ye had met me like a man, I wad hae kenned ye for a gentleman; but, when ye misca'd me for a thief, I was fain to mak' the best excuse I could for ye, and allow that ye were fou'."

"Ye are an honest man wi' your tongue, that I maun grant," said Muir, amused at the quiet self-assertion with which John refused to be browbeaten. "And sin' we've settled that business, that you arena a thief and I am na fou', shall we mak' a barter for the twa pawky cuddies that ye hold by the tether?"

"They arena cuddies, my Laird," said John firmly; "and they arena to sell at the price o' a cuddie. They are true-bred Highland ponies, rough frae their heather beds, but guid for a' weathers, easy to keep and ready for wark."

"Will ye name me a price for the pair o' them?" said Muir, "and show me their gait in the bargain?"

"Aye, my Laird," answered John, "ye can buy them for twal pounds a piece or twenty pounds the pair; and I'll ride them at nine Scots miles the hour."

"And will ye fetch them to my place, Castlewood on the Don water; which is twelve miles as the corbie flies, and seventeen by the niest road?" said Muir.

"I will do it, on the morrow, my Laird," answered John blithely; "but, as I am sellin' these cattle for anither man, ye maun mak' your bargain wi' him as to where the money shall be paid down."

"I'll pay down the money to ye, and tak' the bond o' your honest eye that ye'll play me fair," answered Muir. "But now to the speedin' o' the beasties; let us see how they show their heels to the dust."

John called one of the gypsy lads and, handing him the halter of one of the ponies, bid him mount, while he himself vaulted on the other.

Then up and down the green in front of the inn went the riders at full speed. A crowd quickly gathered, gentlemen, grooms, stable boys, farmers, and gypsies; and there was fine sport and free betting on each course, as it was run. A starter and judge were appointed, and, for a half hour, there was a stirring scene, with an excited crowd shouting encouragement or applause. John knew these Highland ponies well, for was he not their brother; and he managed his so well as to bring him in the winner every time.

Muir was delighted, and when the race was over, paid down the twenty pounds and had John in to drink some stout ale with the gentlemen.

"Ye hae guid luck wi' the ponies," said Muir to John, after they had drunk a stoup or two to the victor. "Ye ken a guid horse and how to guide him."

"Aye," answered John, "if it be a Highland pony, I ken him weel. We grew up thegither. And it's weel the same in dealin' wi' the beasties as wi' men, gin ye hae a fellow-feelin' ye winna gang far wrang wi' ane anither."

"Ye hae seen a bit o' the world, to pick up your nuggets o' wisdom anent man and beast," said Muir, feeling a desire to draw John out.

"It's a sma' matter how muckle o' the world we see, gin a man doesna keep his e'en open, wi' a wit to ken the light when it shines on him. Gin ye watch and hearken ye maun learn a bit here and there, and mony a mickle mak's a muckle; but, gin ye be aye

claverin' wi' your ain tongue, ye winna hear muckle wisdom. My word for it the same is true wi' the beasties; wi' your mouth shut and your e'en open, it is wonderfu' what a power o' instruction ye will get."

John's tongue was loosed by the stout ale; and it was not often that he had the chance of a crack with gentlemen.

Mr. Muir was delighted with his bargain, and John's shrewd and honest talk attracted him mightily; and his manly bearing won the Laird's respect. He wanted just such a man on the estate, and, if further acquaintance should confirm his first estimate of this man, he had never made a luckier purchase than these two ponies. So he bargained with John to remain for a week or two, and break some colts for him.

When the fair broke up John dismissed his forces, sending word to the camp that, in his absence, Jamie Stewart should act as his deputy, and that Helen, Elspeth, and three other women, with six of the men, should meet him at the next county fair at Woodburn.

On the following morning, having laid aside his gypsy costume and donned the dress of a country farmer, John betook himself with the ponies to Castlewood Hall, where he arrived on the following evening.

By the time the colts were broken John and the Laird were well acquainted, and he had proved himself of such service in organizing and directing improvements, so fertile in expedients and keen in his appreciation of Mr. Muir's plans, reliable in what he undertook and able to command men, that his stay of

one week was prolonged indefinitely; and he had become, virtually, the Laird's factor.

It was nearing the time of the Woodburn fair and Mr. Muir was making ready to go down, and was debating with John over the fencing and draining of some low lands and repairing of the tenants' houses, and the renewal or cancellation of some leases; on all which points John had shown a shrewd good sense, and made suggestions of practical value; when Mr. Muir, turning to him, said: "Ye haena always been a tinkler, or I ken naething o' what gaes to the breedin' o' men."

"Nay, my Laird, I hae not. Ye are nigher right than ye were when ye took me for a thief."

"But, John, man, ye maun forget that noo," said Mr. Muir; "for I ken ye for as true a man as ane meets in the langest day's tramp, ane to wham I wad trust a' my gear."

"Ye can do it, my Laird," said John proudly, "and ye'll ne'er hae cause to change your mind. But noo we will look to yon bit fencin'. Shall we rin it down to the burn, or turn it over the hillside to meet the ither fence?" and so he parried the opening up of confidences regarding his past history.

But John was not proof against the gentler method by which Mrs. Muir stirred the deeper waters and brought to the surface the things that were hid from her husband's eyes. She too felt a special interest in this singular gypsy, who was so strong with the laborers and so gentle with her baby. And as he fondled her child, her heart went out to him, and she wanted to know something of his inner life.

As she sat, one evening, on the bench under the spreading beech in front of the Hall, while John was riding the wee Laird on his shoulders, the youngster crowing with excess of joy; in one of the pauses of the sport she said to John:

"Ye maun hae a bairn o' your ain, for ye ken so weel to fondle them."

"Aye, my Leddy," said John, as he thought of his own wild birdie in the camp among the Braemar hills; "I hae a bairnie o' my ain, a wee bit lassie; but she is far frae here."

"Ye'll be longin' for a glint o' her e'en; and ye shall tak' a gift frae me to the lassie. Has she a pair o' blue e'en frae her faither?" said Mrs. Muir, smiling into John's honest eyes.

"Nay, my Leddy, answered John, returning the smile, "her e'en are dark as a fallow deer's; but they are winsome and bonnie, though they arena blue."

"Ye haena clean forgat whan ye were a bairn yersel'. It aye brings back the bonnie days o' youth when these toddlers tak' us by the hand and lead us into the wee folks' land, and gar us forget our carkin' cares," said Mrs. Muir gently.

"Aye, my Leddy, I ken it weel; and I winna forget it. It was blithe in my hame on the glenside, wi' the burn at the foot o' the haugh, where I fished for the trouts and paidled wi' the lads and lassies."

"But my Laird tellit me that ye were ane o' a band o' tinklers wha were at the fair, and I ne'er kenned a tinkler that cam' frae a Highland hame," said Mrs. Muir.

"It wasna my lineage that made me a tinkler, my

Leddy," said John with a tang of pride in his tone; "but the turn o' the tide o' fortune that put me on the wrang side o' the king's service."

"I dinna ken what ye mean," said Mrs. Muir, "nor what king ye hae misprized. There are some wha ca' themselves kings that werena born to rule, and some wha hae been driven frae their birthright. But we maun bide and hope for better days. 'The king will aye come to his ain,' says my Laird; but to me it seems aftwhiles that he is lang a-comin'."

Then John felt that he could tell his story without fear of shocking his hearer's loyalty; and, without further parley, began:

"My Leddy, I was born and reared in the Highlands o' Ross, wi' as guid blude in my veins as rins in mony a well-known house o' Scotland and better than fills the carcass o' mony a Saxon lord. We were scant o' this world's gear, but a lean purse is not the worse misfortune, and I hae yet to learn that lack o' meat ever thinned guid ancient blude. My hame was in a moorland glen; and while I live I will love the scent o' heather and the peat-reek that flavors the 'mountain dew.' There was a wimplin' burn at the foot o' the glen where I caught the trouts in the early morn. We had twa dogs, for my faither was a shepherd; and I was friendly wi' a' aboot me, my douce faither, my gentle mither, our twa collies, and the old gray cat; nor did I quarrel wi' the wooden trencher and spoon wi' which I ate my parritch. I kenned ilka fin that shot acress the dark pools in the windin' burnie; and the bleat o' the sheep on the braes, and the glen itsel', wi' the mist hung owre it in the early

morn—I loved them a', as a boy loves siccan things. There may be bonnier lands for a farmer, and richer lands for a trader, but oh! for a land to love and remember for aye, gie me the Highlands o' Ross. It is a stiff soil for wheat and corn, but it will raise the cockles o' the heart as long as ye bide aboon the gowans." John spoke with that eloquence whose periods are rounded by affection.

"But what led ye awa', when it is sae dear to your heart, John; and winna ye gae back to it again?" said Mrs. Muir, touched by the loyal affection with which John lingered over the simple joys of his early days.

"I winna gae back, my Leddy, for it canna be the same. My faither and mither are deid, and mayhap anither laddie is in the shepherd's hut; and the glen will be ither than it was to the care-free lad wha took the trout frae its burn. Aye the glens and burns bide the same, and we it is wha change. Whan my faither and mither were gane and I left alane, I was fain to be a soldier in a gay uniform, wi' plenty to eat and a sword at my side, and I listed in the Black Watch; and ye ken, my Leddy, what was the end o' that affair. We turned our backs on the disgrace we couldna fend; for it was aye our Scots land that the Saxon traders flyted; and amang them a' there was none braver than a tailor. Ye winna ca' me a coward and deserter, my Leddy, when ye ken that I led the men awa' frae what we couldna help nor hinder?" and John looked at Mrs. Muir appealingly; for she had started when he named the Black Watch.

But he need not fear the judgment of one reared in

a school of politics which taught that the reigning king regarded England as a mere conquest, and that he lived chiefly in Hanover, spending in his dear Electorate the plunder gotten from India and the new world; and to whom Scotland was a conquest of a conquest. To her these were man-made kings, Dutch puppets managed by politicians, and were worthy of scant respect; for Scotchmen owed allegiance to another house.

"Nae man is traitor," said Mrs. Muir warmly, "wha leaves a hireling service when he finds the pay is not worth the toil. Ye made a noble stand, and we were proud to hae the Saxons ken how a true Scot loves his native land. I will hae ye tell me the tale, some time, and meanwhile ye will bide wi' us, John. Stoneywold was already minded to mak' ye baillie o' the estate, and now I will lift baith hands for it. I was minded to tak' tent, and hae ye bide wi' us a bit, till we could ken how ye wad bear yoursel'; but I hae nae doubt o' the man that led the Black Watch. Winna ye bide wi' us now, John?"

"But I am not alane, my Leddy," replied John, touched to the quick now, and ready to make a clean breast of it. "Whan I fled frae the Saxon horde I went by night frae muir to muir and, whan weel-nigh spent, I fell in wi' a band o' cairds, wha gave me meat and drink and shelter. And the daughter o' the chief, o' the ancient family o' Faa, won the heart out o' me, wi' her bonnie black e'en; and Helen Faa is my ain true wife married in the kirk, and I canna forsake her, for she loves me weel; and I canna gae where my wife wadna be welcome, for I love her dearly."

He lost nothing in Mrs. Muir's esteem by this open confession, and she answered him warmly: "I promise your dark-eyed gypsy bride a warm welcome, honest John; for gin she has won you to love her, I warrant she is a true woman."

But John declined to commit himself further than the promise to do his best to win the consent of his gypsy wife to forsake their tents and dwell among men. He left them with the promise that, in any event, they should see him again, and made his way to the fair at Woodburn.

Here he met the detail of his band, led by Jamie Stewart, and Helen with old Elspeth and the other women.

Jamie had seen stormy times while striving to hold the reins of government, and brought a long list of grievances for John to right. He had neither the character nor courage to rule this turbulent band; his fierce, fighting bravery did not atone for the lack of cool nerve to face and master the spirit of rebellion which had been rife under his brief sway; and Jamie was ready enough to hand them over to one whom he recognized as able to control their fiery spirits.

There was plenty of work for the band at the fair, and they were reaping the harvest and bringing the fruit of their labor to John, who was again a brown-skinned gypsy in the tinkler's picturesque garb, in which Mrs. Muir would never have known him, when one of his young men brought him the well-laden green silk purse, whose history Mr. Muir had told him when, from time to time, recourse was had to

it to supply the means for some of their improvements.

John knew it as soon as he saw it in the hands of the gypsy lad, who had lightly relieved the Laird of Stoneywold, as he was deep in discussion with a farmer, among a crowd at a tent door.

No sooner was the purse in John's hands than he saw in what a dilemma it put him with his new-found friends. He had not intended to show himself to Mr. Muir in his present guise. It was an awkward predicament. He might invent a story of the finding of the purse by one of his young men, only to discover that Mrs. Muir had it in charge and had just handed it to the Laird, at the fair.

He did not entertain a thought of its retention; but its restitution was beset with difficulties. Never did man feel gold weigh heavier on heart and pocket, and he cursed the hour when the deft fingers of Will Robertson found their way into Stoneywold's unguarded pouch.

But here it was and something must be done with it, and that without delay, before the loss was discovered and an outcry raised. After much weary conning, John formed this plan: "I'll gae to yon field and bury the mischancie bawbie, then I'll gar old Elspeth seek out the Laird and bid him hearken to the spaewife, wha can show him a mischance that has befallen him and how he can mend his luck, if he will crass her loof wi' siller; and so a saxpence will, mayhap, mend matters again."

He set off forthwith to the meadow where Helen and Elspeth had their tents, apart from the rest of

the band; for John did not permit Helen to mingle in the crowd at the fair as a gypsy fortune-teller, subject to the rude jests of the hucksters.

While on his way, he saw a woman sitting under a hedgerow by the roadside, a country Jean with a homespun kirtle wrapped about her, the hood drawn over her head, holding a baby in her arms.

John was used to disguises of all sorts and, under the homespun cloak, he recognized a pose of the head and shoulders and a posture that does not belong to the back that is bent under burdens.

He had passed to the other side of the hedge and drawing nearer recognized, in the soft lullaby that she was crooning, the voice of the Lady of Stoneywold. John saw in this a golden opportunity, and, stepping up lightly and quickly behind the lady, reached through the hedge, lifted a corner of the kirtle, dropped the purse into her lap, and, before she could turn her head, was gone, with a conscience and pocket both mightily eased.

CHAPTER VI.

“THE REEK O’ MY AIN HOUSE IS BETTER THAN
THE FIRE O’ MY NEEBOR’S.”

AFTER handing over the green silk purse to such safe keeping, John addressed himself to the setting in order of his own affairs. He found his way quickly to the tent where wife and wean awaited him, watched over by old Elspeth. Helen’s ear caught the sound of his step while he was yet a great way off, and she was ready, with their baby in her arms, to meet him.

How beautiful she looked, to John, as she stood in the shadow of the birch tree, her black hair lustrous, as the sifted sunlight fell upon it, her dark eyes lit with glowing love, her teeth between her parted lips like pearls set in rubies, her whole poise alert to greet his coming. John paused for a moment to inhale the exceeding beauty of her face and loveliness of form, e’er it should be hidden in his close embrace. For a moment, he stood gloating over his treasure and then hurried forward to take her in his arms.

He took the weanie from her and tossing it high in the air caught the crowing fairy as it came down from its flight, like a callow nestling that has spread its wings too soon, while Helen watched intently, with a still delight, like that which is shown by animals,

eager yet repressed. When he handed back the child, he caught her too in his arms, as though she were but a larger child, and, after he had thus expended some of the exuberance of his spirits, sat himself down beside her and opened up the grave subject of the proposed change in their manner of life.

"My ain wild cushat," he said, as she sat, with her hands clasped, looking him in the eye with a gaze that held him. "Are ye glad to see me back again, my bonnie mirk-eyed lassie?"

"Aye, John," she said simply; and how true her voice rang.

"I hae been leadin' a braw life, in the house o' a laird and leddy," said John. And Helen's face fell, as it always did when John made reference to the other side of his life; for she feared he might feel that his fortunes were fallen.

"Was it bonnie, John; and did ye long to bide wi' them?" and the tone was one of suspense.

"I canna bide awa' frae the lassie that I love," said John, answering the latter half of the query first; and Helen smiled. "But it is a bonnie life whan a man can feel that he is put to a man's wark and can win honor frae his fellow-men."

Helen was silent. All this meant nothing to her, who felt that the honor of being chief of a band was enough to fill the measure of a man's ambition. John watched the shadow steal over her face, as when one walking in pleasant company looks up suddenly to find one's self alone.

"Aye, Helen, it is weel for a man whan he can win not only the rule o' a band o' outlaws but also the

trust o' men that haud a place in the land," he said, with that positive tone which so often passes for argument, especially in the dealings of men with their women.

Helen listened, but she knew nothing of the motions of such an ambition, her horizon being limited by the point from which she had always looked on life.

"Aye, John," she answered, after a little, "it may be, for them wha ken o' sic matters; but I ken naught o' lairds and leddies."

"Lairds and leddies," answered John sententiously, "are a' the same as ither folk, only just wi' anither name."

"Weel, John," said Helen plaintively, "then why not bide wi' the ither folk, and not fash yoursel' whether the lairds and leddies love ye or leave ye?"

"Ye winna understand, Helen. I carena whether they love me or no; but a man wins his place in the world by the one wham he serves. If he serve the king, he is a courtier; if a laird, he is a baillie, and through a' the kintra side he is respectit, and can haud up his head amang his fellows," said John, puzzled to make his gypsy wife see that the tame dignity of the steward of a Scotch laird was to be compared with the royal honors of one who was a lord and earl of Little Egypt.

"Haena I heard ye say, John, 'far frae court, far frae care'; and winna the same rule haud by your lairds and their leddies?"

"I am minded, Helen, to tak' service wi' the Laird o' Stoneywold. He is a douce gentleman and his wife is a canty leddy. I will aye bide true to the

Lochgellie band, and can aftwhiles help them out o' a strait. But I wad see ye, as my wife, Helen, haud anither place than as ane o' a band o' tinklers; and wad fain see our wee lassie, in whose veins rins the blude o' the Faas, wi' a mixture o' Highland blude o' guid and ancient strain, bred in a better way o' life than as a tinkler's bairn, wi' the fate to wed siccan as Jamie Stewart or Tam Ruthven," said John, bringing to bear such influences as might win Helen to appreciate the blessings of a gentler mode of life.

"Aweel, John, gin ye maun gae, I will gae wi' ye," said Helen sadly. "Are there braes there, John, and a meadow by the roadside, and can we bide in tents in the pleasant simmer days?"

"It is a bonnie place, Helen; the braes are fine and the braid haughs fu' o' gowans, and the copses fu' o' red deer, and the braw salmon leap in the Don water. We shall hae a cot o' our ain, finer than ony hut in Little Carron, and your ain chicks and a wee cow in the byre. And whan I come hame frae my day's work, there will my Helen sit by the cottage door croonin' to the weanie :

"Balow, my wean, lie still and sleep,
It grieves me sair to see thee weep."

And John drew the picture with all those touches which might appeal to Helen. There was one thing that did appeal to her, namely, John's evident desire to go; and she would surely go with him. But Ishmael never loved the tents of his brethren.

"Shall we see the road nae mair, John, and aye live in ane lone spot?" asked Helen sadly.

"The spot winna be lanely, my wee wifie, and ye shall visit your friends whenever ye will," was John's compliant answer.

"How will old Elspeth fare wi'out me?" said Helen; for, though the old woman stood to her more in the light of a spaewife than a mother, yet she could not forget all that they owed to her.

"She maun come and bide wi' us," answered John; though his heart misgave him as to how this new, and not altogether attractive, appendage would impress his new-found friends. But, after all, she would be only a figure in the background, and would not come in contact with the community in which their lot was to be cast, and he would risk her acceptance as part of his retinue; in any event he would not forsake her.

"I am ready to gae wi' ye, John," was Helen's final answer. But it was not a choice between the two modes of life; she gave up all to follow him.

Old Elspeth made the other choice; but she bade John go, and Helen go with him. "I am aye proud to see ane wha has led a tinkler's life gae amang men and show them that we are as guid as the best. It pleases me unco' weel to see an Egyptian maid marry a man o' high degree and gar them ken that the women o' Little Egypt are equal to ony leddy in the land. I hae seen them in high places, and they mak' bonnie brides for the best o' men; an' the jewels look fine in the braids o' their dark hair. I bid ye gae, John, and mak' Helen a leddy, and let her be buskit as fine as the best o' them, and send the weanie to their schules; and foul fare the gomeril wha points

the finger o' scorn at her as a tinkler's bairn. Gae to their Kirk, John, and foregather wi' them in the kirkyard, and tak' Helen wi' ye in her silks and jewels, and show them a' that there is nae bounnier wife in Scotland than Helen Faa, sae proud and fit to sit wi' them in kirk or ha'. But let me bide wi' the band. I hae danced, in my time, wi' mony a gallant, whan my step was light and my eye was bright; and they hae whispered saft words in my ear; but my hand was keepit for a better and braver man, and I never had cause to greet that I chose Andrew Faa aboon them a'. But that was lang syne, and I am unco strange to their ways, and far gane in years to leave my people and lodge amang strangers. But ye are nae mair than bairns to me; so gae to the place that is open to ye and ye needna fear for me; there is nane daur crass my will or tempt my displeasure."

Helen was amazed at this hearty endorsement of John's plan by old Elspeth, and disposed to think better of this other life, which was only a vague dream-land to her, when she heard that its realms had been open to others of her race, and that even old Elspeth had trodden a measure in its stately halls.

Little more was said upon the subject, except that John gave them a glowing picture of the splendors of Castlewood and a life-like portrait of the Laird and Leddy, not forgetting the wee Laird also. Helen was glad that there was a child there, and her heart was further won by the trinket which Mrs. Muir had sent to her baby; and, on the whole, it was with a good heart that she came to look on her new life.

There was a pathetic tremor in old Elspeth's voice

as she said, later, "Can the wean bide wi' me to-night, Helen?" and she drew it close to her, when Helen laid the sleeping infant in her arms.

Long after John and Helen were sound asleep, in the still summer night, as her favorite stars rose in the sky, the old spaewife sat and cast spells of riches, honor, health, long life, and a happy marriage about the innocent, sleeping babe. And, ever and anon, while she waited for the stars to rise, there rose within her own heart the kindlings of a human affection, and great, silent tears fell on the face of the child and made it stir in its sleep; and she cast over the bairn of her bairn the charm of a mother's love descending from one generation to another; and this is better than the spells that come from the cold light of stars. And so she spent the night alternately blessing and weeping over the child that was to learn the lesson of forgetting that she was born of an Egyptian mother.

When the morning came John made ready for his departure by summoning his young men and announcing the change to them.

"I am going to tak' service wi' the Laird o' Stoneywold, and am ready to lay down the office o' chief o' the Lochgellie band, gin ye are minded to put anither man in my place; or I will haud the place, and frae time to time come amang ye and tak' tent o' your doin's, and stand ye in stead when ye are in any strait, as ye did by me."

This announcement was met with a blank dismay which pleased John mightily. They looked from one to the other, aghast, with never a word. Ready as they were to struggle against the strong hand of an

arbitrary rule, yet at heart they felt its necessity, each for the other; and, like all blessings, John's virtues shone in view of their loss. John watched them with a grim satisfaction, and above all, was tickled at Jamie Stewart's uneasy demeanor.

"Ye hae tasted the sweets o' power," he said, turning to Jamie. "Shall we cast a vote for ye, Jamie?" An audible titter went round the circle.

"I hae a' that I can dae to keep my ain business in hand," replied Jamie, "and I winna fash mysel' wi'ither folk's affairs;" and he drew back from the group, cowering under old Elspeth's eye, who sat in her tent door, looking ready, Jamie thought, to launch the thunderbolt of her direful secret at his head.

After some parley it was agreed that Charlie Graham should act as deputy, with John as chief, to whom all graver questions should be referred when, once a month, he visited the band.

After this it remained only to say good-by; and, with a parting blessing from old Elspeth, they turned their backs upon the life which had been full of many a wild adventure and many a wayside pleasure, and betook themselves, down the winding Don as it wanders toward the sea, to enter upon a new life; and Elspeth watched them till they were out of sight.

John felt elated on his return to a settled mode of life, where he would become known in the community, and identified with a man of standing.

Helen felt a vague unrest, a fear that the freedom of her life would be curtailed; that she was to be as a caged bird; and she became constrained and silent.

John, at first, preoccupied with his own thoughts,

did not notice this; but at length her unwonted silence, who was always full of prattle as a song-bird in the spring, roused him from his reverie and drew his attention to her wistful face.

"Isna it bonnie by the Don side, my dearie?" said John cheerily. "And ye hae naething to say; and I miss the music o' your voice."

"Aye, it is bonnie by the Don side," replied Helen.

"But why are ye sae still, Helen?" persisted John.

"I hae naught to say, John."

"But ye are fu' o' mony thoughts, Helen; I ken that by your wide e'en."

"It is a' sae new and strange to me, John," said Helen tearfully; "and I maun spier what it is like."

"Do ye mean the Don water, Helen? We hae ridden mony a mile adown it, before to-day, my wifie," said John gayly.

"Na, na, John, the glens and the burns arena strange to me; whichever way they rin, my heart rins up or doun wi' them. But I am leavin' them noo," said Helen, with the tone of a prisoner, on the way to his cell, taking a last look at the free hills and valleys.

"But, my birdie, ye will bide in a glen by a burn-side, free as the wind to come or go as ye list," replied John, in a soothing tone. "If ye arena happy, my Helen, we winna bide wi' the Laird."

"I am happy to bide where ye are, John. I gae wi' ye willin', and I'll bide wi' ye true." This was the conclusion of the whole matter with Helen. With but one tie to bind her, it held her with the intensity of an untamed affection; for she knew no higher law than that which bade her love and obey the chief of

her clan and the lord of her heart. Soon, like a child, she responded to John's effort to win her interest in their new surroundings, and entered into his hopes and ambitions, as she, sooner or later, entered into all that concerned him.

On their arrival at Stoneywold they were given a cottage down by the borders of the stream, apart from the other tenants. It was small and rustic enough to fulfill Helen's ambition that it should be like a tent. There was a little byre beside the cottage where John soon installed a cow, and started Helen in business with a small stock of poultry; and after this fashion she began her new life.

Mrs. Muir took a lively interest in John's gypsy bride. The romance of the whole affair invested it with the interest of a story, and Helen's dark beauty and gentle manners attracted Mrs. Muir strongly.

She had her up to the house, with her baby, to amuse the little Laird; and Helen played with the two in a wild, free way that was pretty to look at, and very entertaining to the youngsters; and soon Mrs. Muir grew fond of her, seeing the depth and tenderness of her nature, her devoted love of John, and her winsome ways with the little ones. She presided over Helen's toilet and moderated her native love for gaudy color and adornment so far that Helen could go to the kirk without riveting every eye on her; though under such gaze Helen was perfectly composed, accepting it as the proper tribute to her brave array.

John's hands were full of the affairs of the estate; and the stir of this new life, with its real work, was

wholly to his taste. It was a time when most men looked askance on progress in farming methods, as of doubtful value; while Mr. Muir was fully persuaded that he would be repaid for any outlay in this direction. It was his ambition not merely to own land, but to make it the best land in the shire, and win renown for his herd, and be ahead of his neighbors. John's interest and ambition were aroused, and he was so intelligent and active that he became not merely a trusted dependant, but an essential factor in putting Mr. Muir's plans in execution.

"Three days in each month," he told the Laird, "I maun hae to mysel' to set in order the affairs o' a sma' estate o' my ain, that fell to me as my wife's tocher, before I took service wi' ye, my Laird."

"Aye, John," answered Mr. Muir, with a twinkle in his eye, "there are kittle herds on that estate, and ye maun hae an eye to them, John. It is canty to hae baith ends o' the burrow open, as the hare said to the hound."

Then John knew that the Laird was aware in what country his estate lay; but they did not speak of it in plainer terms. Stoneywold estate was singularly exempt from depredation, nor was the green silk purse ever in danger again, for it was intrusted to John's keeping when they carried it to the fairs.

Among the gentry it came to be understood that John could set many a thing right that was gone astray, and his services were often in requisition. When a merry lord was eased of his purse, at a fair, entailing a loss too heavy to be endured in silence, if he were prudent and a friend of Stoneywold's, instead

of raising a fruitless disturbance and handing a half dozen of the lads over to the constables, he would quietly relate his loss to the Laird of Stoneywold, who, calling John aside, would say:

“John, my Laird of so and so tells me that he canna well thole so heavy a loss as he has met with, at the hands o’ some feckless lads, wha forgot that he was a friend o’ ours. He was minded to send you a yearlin’ bullock, but, now, can ill afford it. It seems a pity, but I wanted ye to know o’ the Laird’s guid-will to ye.”

“Aweel, I must look to it,” John would say. “It may be that some o’ my lads will ken mair o’ this matter than I wot”; and, without more ado, the purse would find its way back to the owner, and a stoup of ale consoled the young fellows for the loss of the pelf, and the yearling bullock found its way to the camp of the Lochgellies.

Thus did a little well-timed forbearance spare both parties the vexation and expense of a suit at law.

The monthly visit to the band was, at first, an event to which Helen looked forward with longing. But, as she became wonted to her new surroundings, the terror of restraint fading, as she saw how free she was, and the honor in which John was held becoming apparent to her, she was not only content but proud of their position; and she saw clearly that the life of her child, growing in health and beauty, the playmate of the children at the Hall, was happier and better than a life by the roadside.

Then, too, the pleasure of their visits to the band

was marred by the vexatious brawls brought to John for adjudication.

The stories of their exploits did not sound so brave, in the recounting, as they seemed when, living in their midst, she felt the excitement of the action while the drama was being played. These things took on another aspect now and seemed unworthy of John's notice, to whom so much graver interests were intrusted, and whose advice was listened to by gentlemen of consequence. As for John, he was willing enough to slacken the ties that bound him to his past life, and yet was determined that none should have just cause to say that he had forgotten the debt he owed them, or that he dishonored the obligation when the drafts were heavy on him.

As the months and years rolled on, John grew more important to Mr. Muir, and his duties and responsibilities made him a graver man, with the weight of character that belongs to an established position in the community.

He used his position as gypsy chief to restore plunder, when the circumstances appealed to his sympathy, or there was danger of an outcry which would threaten the safety of the band; and this was the easier for him to do, because his knowledge of their secrets gave him almost a power of life or death over them.

He discovered thefts and secured restitution after so wonderful a fashion that the country people believed that he had the gift of second sight, and feared and respected him, as they are apt to do those of uncanny reputation.

John grew in favor with the Laird of Stoneywold, who respected him for his true manliness, and threw himself without reserve upon his fealty, and nothing could have won it better. His allegiance could not be bought with uataled goid, but trust in his truth held him with hooks of steel.

CHAPTER VII.

"THERE IS NAE SPORT WHERE THERE IS NEITHER
AULD FOLK NOR BAIRNS."

AS the seasons came and went there were added to the family at Stoneywold another laddie, Thomas, and then, in regular succession, Janet, Margaret, and Helen, and, after these, Willie and Robert, a merry troupe which kept the halls resounding with the tinkle of children's footsteps, and echoing with the laughter of the bonnie bairns. Helen Gunn was the playmate of them all, with a touch of the wild, free nature of her race that made her fawn-like and lissome in heart and action, akin to little children.

John, besides his duties as baillie of the estate, was the preceptor of the boys in all that related to outdoor life, the teaching not to be had from the books which their tutor set them to study. They were as well taught in folk and fairy lore as children of a later day, for they needed no picture books to endow with life the vivid scenes which Helen would portray to the gaping circle, tales of the wild gypsy life, of the "Gaberlunzie Man," of old John Faa the Earl, of "Rattlin' Roarin' Willie," and of her own life by the roadside. With old Elspeth the children became as familiar as other children are with the fairy god-mother; and she ranked beside this potent actor in

the drama, which, in diverse form, is pictured for the children of every age, where good and evil contend, and, at the last, the good is on the winning side, as it ought to be for children. John told them the Highland tales of the cantrips of wraith and sprite, kelpie and bogie, until their hearts would beat high at the roar of the Don water in the spring floods, as they listened for the kelpies' cry.

But John did better work with the boys than this course in Highland folk-lore; he taught them the manly arts of which it becomes a lad, whether Highland or Lowland, to be master. From him they learned to hunt and fish, to make a fly and cast it well, to know the haunts and habits of trout and salmon, where they feed, how to watch for them, strike them, and land them deftly. He taught them to swim and row a boat, to follow the red deer and find the grouse, to ride a horse and break him to saddle or harness, to wrestle and ply the quarter-staff, to put the stone, to jump, and to play at golf. The boys worshiped him as possessing all the most desirable accomplishments; and the gaunt, learned stripling, who was their tutor, suffered sadly by comparison of his tamer parts with John's more manly gifts. In all these matters James took the lead; Thomas was ill fitted to control a horse and was slow with his gun, though somewhat more skillful at the oars, and a good fisherman.

As the lads grew and their characters developed, James showed, more and more, an open nature, strong and full of resources, quick to make friends and apt to command; while Thomas was secretive and often sullen, always ready to temporize, trusting

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to gain his end by artifice rather than to meet and conquer a difficulty by downright force. James took defeat in good part and laughed off his disappointment; Thomas was out of sorts for a day when any got the better of him. As a consequence James was a favorite with all the tenants and the children; Thomas was a favorite with no one but himself.

Among the constant visitors to the Hall was Janet McKenzie, a Highland cousin from Ardross, a bonnie lass, full of life and freshness, who, like the heroine of the fairy tale, "had skin as white as snow and cheeks as red as a rose," and a heart as sweet as heather in bloom; and was known as the "Lily and rose of Ross." Her favor was sought by both the lads, and, while yet too young to be thinking of such things, they were making hot love to their cousin.

Whatever a boy could bring to his sweetheart they vied in offering to her, the skin of an otter, the plume of a bird, or the first wild flowers; and in this contest James had always the advantage.

The pony that she was to ride had been broken by James to a gentle gait and easy control; and, while he taught her to manage the horse and jump ditch or hurdle, Thomas was full of sulky discontent, seeing how many a chance was open to James, by his better knowledge of such things, to win a gracious smile or thanks.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Muir, who saw that Thomas was not apt to learn nor skilled in managing affairs, concluded that he was best fitted for a seafaring life, and so, when he was about fourteen, sent him to sea. From time to time he came back, in his sailor uni-

form, and, with the air of one who has seen the great world, essayed to patronize his stay-at-home brother.

But, whatever he was in the great world, at Stoneywold he must play a second part. James grew to be thorough master of the estate, and, as his father advanced in years, took more upon himself, having John Gunn at his elbow to tell him how things had always been managed; and, outside the estate, he was a leader of the hunting parties, a man of mark in the shire, of whom men spoke with respect as a rising man.

From time to time, as Janet made her annual visit to Stoneywold, she grew into a companionship with James that was natural and very pleasant, full of mutual confidences, cousinly, but dangerous; unless indeed they were fearless of such danger, as they seemed to be.

The first sign of a change in their relation as cousins, girl and boy together, was when Janet, now grown to be eighteen and a young woman, shrank gently back from James's warm kiss of greeting.

"Why, Janet," said the astonished James, "will ye hae me forget that we are nigh o' kin?"

"I winna forget, Jamie," she said, blushing red, "that I am nae mair a child, and my mither says that I maun always remember that a woman's lips are for her lover."

To himself James said: "A plague on the saws o' a crabbit auld woman," but to Janet he replied, with a light laugh: "Then I maun be your lover, Janet, and claim my right for aye."

But no such off-hand declaration as this sufficed to install him in the place.

"That may be, Jamie; wha can tell?" she said, as lightly as he had spoken. Though, if the truth must be told, this was not the first time that the thought had flitted through her head. "But until ye are my lover, ye maun welcome me as ye do ither lassies, wi' a hearty hand-shake and your bonnie smile. And perchance before ye are minded to court me, my lips will be pale and the roses faded frae my cheeks, so that ye winna care to kiss them."

All this was said so lightly that James began to have an uneasy suspicion that there was some Ross-shire carle in the way, and that he had been left behind by not seizing the lead at the start. He had often lost a race by this blunder, and perhaps it was true in this sort of race that a good lead is half the victory. But the grapes that hang high are ever the sweetest, and Janet's lips never looked so tempting.

"I am half minded to snatch a kiss, willy-nilly; for he that winna whan he may, canna whan he wad," he said, with an uneasy laugh and a saucy light in his eye.

"Ye can do that, right easily, Jamie," she said, without moving a step; as he thought, half daring him to do it. "But I dinna think the after-taste o' such stolen fruit is sweet. I canna say nay to your strong arms, Jamie; but I can say to your heart, I wouldna do it if I were you."

Jamie began hastily to make excuse: "But I hae aft kissed ye, Janet. I hae always kissed ye whan ye first cam'; and I hae no kind o' likin' for this new-fangled

notion that ane mair year can mak' a bar between those wha are so nigh o' kin." Then he took on an injured air, and sought out a shaft to touch a tender spot in her heart. "'Perchance the sweet things which some Highland lad has told ye turn ye awa' frae me; but I'm as guid as ony lad o' the Highlands, and it needna hurt your pride when ye gae back, and the gomeril spiers, did I kiss ye, to tell him I did. It wouldna spoil your lips entirely for his poutin' snout."

"We maun quit this talk, Jamie," Janet said quietly, though her lips quivered and her eye glistened. "I will gae to your mither, for her welcome," and she turned and left him thoroughly crestfallen and ready to bite off the end of his disgraceful, unruly tongue. Not knowing how to mend the matter he made it worse, by keeping aloof from Janet all day, making himself thoroughly miserable, and her unhappy. Leaving her to ride with Thomas that afternoon, he wandered about the estate, bent on forgetting her; and, as the thought of her would intrude, he began to resent this as of her doing and to conjure up, from her words or looks, some good, solid grievance, some heartless conduct which would let him accuse her, or retort so that her eyes would not only glisten but be flooded with tears—something that would rankle in her heart, making her as thoroughly miserable as he was.

Then his mood would change; she was all loveliness, and he would plan to minister to her pleasure and move her heart to tenderness.

He spent the next week in training his own pony, which no one but himself had ever ridden, to a gentle

gait, and brought it to the door, himself, for her to mount.

"Why, Jamie, this is your ain Charlie; I canna ride him," said Janet, with glowing eyes, for she had often wished to try the spirited fellow.

"I hae been trainin' him a' the week, while you and Thomas were ridin'. He is gentle noo, and will gang an easy pace, gin ye slacken the rein a bit and say 'easy, boy.' I kenned ye wished to ride him," said Jamie, with a dejected air.

"But what will ye ride yoursel', Jamie," said Janet, winningly; telling him, in word and manner both, whom she expected for her cavalier.

"I winna ride ony ither o' the cattle, and ye are sae weel fixed wi' Thomas for companion that it wad seem strange wi' me alang; but I kenned ye wad be pleased wi' Charlie."

She smiled her thanks and told him how much she would enjoy a ride on Charlie, and would liked to have told him how much nicer it would be with Charlie's master along; but did not.

How often lips are sealed and opened too late for those whose happiness in life hangs on a simple word.

As Janet rode off, smiling her thanks and shouting back that Charlie's gait was perfect, James ground his teeth and denounced her as heartless, caring only to have her own way, at the cost of another's suffering. Yet all the while he did not believe his own words, and would have resented them from other lips; but he wondered whether Thomas made love to her, on their long rides; and whether she were so chary of her favors to him. Altogether the tender passion, having

gotten a twist awry in this young man's heart, was anything but tender—in fact, was very savage; showing what our better traits become when they are perverted.

Mrs. Muir looked on well-pleased at the turn of affairs; for it suited her plans that Thomas should wed his fair cousin of Ardross, who had a small dowry and came of an excellent family. For her eldest son she had formed more ambitious projects; and it was high time to set things in train to realize them.

James was now twenty-five; her husband was showing signs of age, even she herself was no longer young; the estate was in James's hands and he was its representative in all county matters; it was fitting that he should become the nominal, as well as the actual, head of the house, and a wife to preside at his table was indispensable.

This very afternoon, when James, in desperate humor, was ready to berate Janet as heartless and faithless to unspoken vows, when his mind was thoroughly alienated from her, did Mrs. Muir, unhappily for all concerned, select as the fittest time to broach this subject.

James was standing on the lawn, under the window, savagely switching off every flower or blade of grass that lifted its head above its fellows, when his mother called him. He came and sat at her feet, on the window-sill.

"Jamie, I am minded that ye shall hae charge o' the estate," began Mrs. Muir.

"Aweel, I hae a' the charge o' it that I ken how to tak'," replied James, not very graciously.

"I ken that weel, my laddie; but we are minded to hand the hale matter owre to ye and let a' the kintra-side see that ye are the Laird o' Stoneywold," said Mrs. Muir, with a touch of pride in her tone.

"That is unco kind, mither; but I wadna hae my faither think that I am waitin' for deid men's shoon. For a son that does that should gae lang barefoot. There is room for us a' under the roof; I winna spier for the day that will mak' me an orphan," said James, with hearty feeling.

"Aye, Jamie, we ken that surely. Ye are a guid son, and we wad fain see ye where it is your right to be, the Laird o' Stoneywold; and then ye winna wait for deid men's shoon," said Mrs. Muir. "But your faither will settle a' that. I hae summat o' anither kind to say to ye. The Laird o' Stoneywold maun tak' his place amang the gentry o' the shire, and, for this, he needs a wife to bid his guests welcome. I am no longer fit to haud the place o' Leddy of Stoneywold, for I am weary o' their junketin's, and therefore ye maun choose a wife, James, wi'out further loss o' time."

"It is ill choosin' a wife till a man kens what he will do wi' her," replied James, taking refuge in an old proverb.

"But the Laird o' Stoneywold has a place for a wife, fit for ony leddy in the land," said Mrs. Muir, determined to push matters.

"Aye, that may be; but will the place fit the wife or will the wife fit the place?" said James, fencing.

"I ken ane wha wad fit the place, and wad mak' the place fit her—the Leddy Helen, daughter o' the

Earl o' Morven, o' gentle blude and wi' a fine, large dower. I was told by Leddy Mary Douglas, wha is seekin' a bride for her ain lad, that the Leddy Helen will fetch to her husband's house a tocher naething less than thirty thousand pound," and Mrs. Muir held her breath after giving utterance to the astounding sum.

"Then, as for the Leddy Helen, it is no what she is, but, what has she?" said James with a cynical smile. "Here we maun needs harry oursel's wi' lookin' for deid men's shoon. It aye suits me better to deal wi' the livin' and hae done wi' it."

"Aweel then," said Mrs. Muir, showing that she was prepared for a siege, "gin ye winna tak' tent o' Leddy Helen's dowry, what say ye to Margaret Erskine o' Pittoderie. She is your cousin, and ye canna quarrel wi' the blude o' the Erskines nor wi' Margaret's beauty. She hasna the tocher, it is true, to compare wi' Leddy Helen's noble portion, but is fairly dowered," and Mrs. Muir watched James keenly, as she presented the points of these available matches.

James, at first inclining to be vexed, now fell to being amused at this evidence of his mother's fendy care of his matrimonial interests.

"Margaret is sae tall and proud, my mither dear," he said smiling. "She wad freeze the marrow in my banes, if I didna keep wi' her haughty step as she swept acass the wide hall; she was born to be queen or, at the least, a first lady of honor. Let us hear o' the next o' your bonnie damsels that are waitin' to be made mistress o' Stoneywold."

"I didna say ony sic a thing, Jamie; and I weary o' your idle clishmaclaver, when I am sair in earnest. I hae kept my e'en open, and a mither can tell a man what he canna well spier for himsel', and can let a lad ken the tocher and temper o' some wha wad mak' him a suitable wife. Ye maun do your ain courtin', as ye see your brother Thomas do his," said Mrs. Muir, in a tone of reproof. Had her eyes been on James, she would have seen him wince at this; as it was, his mood changed.

"Aweel, what say ye to Lord Elsmere's daughter, wi' a tocher o' forty thousand marks, to be paid down on her weddin' day? She is a bright, bonnie lass, wi' wham ye hae danced and had mony a pleasant crack at young Eildon's weddin'. If it wad please ye to ken her better, we can easily mend the trouble o' scant acquaintance; I will gi'e a house party, wi' her for the odd guest wham ye will be bound to look after;" and Mrs. Muir felt as if she were getting "warm," as the children call it in their play.

"He that canna do as he wad, maun do as he can," muttered James; which was an enigma to his mother. "I will first gae to Kenmuir Hall and begin my acquaintance under her father's roof; and later on ye may bring her here as a guest, if things move on according to our wish."

This suited Mrs. Muir and she leaned over and kissed her son, calling him the pride of the house; and James was glad that somebody was pleased, and thought that after all Annie Elsmere, with her pink cheeks, flaxen hair, and soft blue eyes, would not make a man miserable, and would be a dutiful wife. To-

morrow he would ride over to Kenmuir; therefore Janet could not have Charlie.

And, all this while, as Janet rode through the wooded glen, she was so silent that Thomas had his thoughts for his company, and her eyes looked dark and deep, as she thought how much time James must have spent to train his pony, and all to please her. This thought kept her company for many a mile, so that she did not care to talk, but rode along in happy contentment with this one sweet morsel, turning it over and over, and always with some new sweetness in it.

When they reached home James was ready to lift her from the pony, and, without waiting for him to ask, she told him how charming her ride had been; all which he set down as another step in the progress of Thomas's wooing and another argument in favor of Annie Elsmere.

"I am sorry that I canna promise ye the same pleasure to-morrow," said James moodily; "but I hae need o' the horse mysel'."

"Oh! I didna count on that, Jamie," said Janet sweetly. "One canna expect twa sic rides. We taste sic pleasures only once." Then Jamie was sure that Thomas had given the girl the taste of a lover's first utterance of his passion, hot and eager in its uncertainty, the thrill of which can never be repeated; and as he looked on Janet she seemed homely as compared with Annie; she was certainly wanting in womanly reserve, thus to flaunt his brother's proposal in his face, when the matter was scarce concluded. He was glad that it was not his love affair

that was being thus hastily paraded, and the delicate aroma of its secrecy thrown away before it was an hour old.

"I hae business o' moment that ca's me to Kenmuir Hall to-morrow, or I wad gie ye anither ride on Charlie," said James, with a mingled emotion of love and hatred toward this splendid girl whom he was to call sister.

"Aweel," thought he, "she maun greet owre it yet; wi'out ony muckle tocher, on Thomas's pay as a sailor, they may fare hard." Then he pictured how he would come to their aid, and she would thank him and love him with the grateful affection of a sister; and it made him heartsick to think of it.

"Can I ride wi' ye to Kenmuir, Jamie? I wad fain see Annie; she and I hae had mony a pleasant time together," said Janet, with a little pleading tone; for she saw that something was amiss.

"I think not," answered James brusquely. "Annie will be busy; and twa is aye sonsie; ye can bide wi' Thomas." He looked her full in the face, over which a shadow passed at his brusque denial; but there was not a trace of change at the latter part of his speech.

When the morrow came, true to his perverse humor, off went James to Kenmuir Hall, and Janet was nowhere to be seen. He did not ride off like a gay cavalier bound on a gallant errand. Perhaps it would have cheered him had he known that, behind the blinds of her casement, Janet watched him while the tears ran down her cheeks at the thought of how all was changed between them—and why?

This she could not ask him; and, when she asked her own heart, she could find no answer. But she watched him out of sight, and then sank down on the floor, with her head on the casement sill, and let the tears flow unchecked, while the soft summer air blew over her face, and seemed to make her more desolate.

She started, like a guilty thing, when the latch of her chamber door was lifted and Mrs. Muir came in. Janet was always, more or less, afraid of her stately cousin; for as the years had flown Mrs. Muir had grown more formal in manner, with the air of a woman of the world, and imperative as one used to having her way in her own domain and not ready to tolerate insubordination.

Janet thought her hard and unfeeling, which was not true; but she was certainly determined to have her way.

She came over to where Janet was seated on the floor, and, either not seeing or not choosing to notice the traces of tears, said, in that decisive tone which always frightened Janet:

“I hae been minded to talk wi’ ye, Janet, before ye left us. Ye are grown to be a woman noo, my lassie, and it is time for ye to think o’ bein’ a wife.” Taking no note of Janet’s deprecatory gesture and exclamation, she went on: “Oh! I ken a’ that folly, that young lassies shouldna think on sic matters till the lad has come and spoken to them; but that is neither here nor there, the hizzies hae their heads fu’ o’ it; and, gin they wad be douce and honest, let them show it by the way they hearken to the counsel o’ women wha ken o’ sic matters and can tell them what they winna

hear frae the love-sick lads. I wad see ye mak' a wise choice, and I think ye winna be wholly averse to my counsel, when I tell ye that ye maun gae farther and fare worse than to come into this house as a daughter, where ye will hae a bonnie welcome," said the old lady kindly; for she was fond of Janet, who had never crossed her; whereas her own daughter, Margaret (the only surviving one of the four), being cast in the same mold, had often come into conflict with her, and the issue of such contests had not been decisive victory for Mrs. Muir.

In answer to this discreet counsel, Janet hid her face on the window-sill and the crimson blushes suffused her face and neck.

"I thought as much, my dear," said the merciless old lady. "Nay, I was sure of it, or I would not have spoken. And now, my dear, my mind is weel at rest. I had a long talk wi' Jamie yesterday, and all is clear before me; I shall see my sons in honor and happy, and, as for Margaret and me, we will do verra weel together. I misdoubt me that Margaret was designed by Providence for ony man that I hae met, up to this moment." She patted Janet on the head, and, as she rose to go, added, "We shall hear frae Jamie, when he returns to-night," and then left the room.

She found Thomas in the hall below and bid him set his mind at rest, for his cousin Janet had confessed her love for him. "But ye maun say naething to her while she bides wi' us. It is aye fittin' that a maid be wooed in her ain hame. Gin ye arena man eneuch to gae and seek her, she hauds hersel' too cheap if she

doesna say ye nay." Moreover the crafty old lady proposed to have a word with Lady Ardross, whose pride, and ambition for her daughter, might require some persuasion, and who would surely want to know just what Mr. Thomas Muir's prospects were, before she would smile on this trysting.

Janet was left in a turmoil of feeling. She did not doubt, for a moment, who was her lover, but she would rather have had him speak for himself. Nevertheless she gave herself over to the sweet illusion, and explained away Jamie's wayward conduct, and, reviewing the history of the past three or four weeks, understood the training of the pony; but there were other things not so easy to understand. Mrs. Muir's vague allusion to her sons. What had Thomas to do with this? Why did not Jamie let her go to Kenmuir and tell her this as they rode along, instead of leaving her alone all day, to be told it by his mother. He must make amends to her for this, unless he had a better explanation than she could devise.

Ah well! this evening would bring the sweet assurance from his own lips; and what were lovers' misunderstandings, but the little artifices by which more tenderness was won and warmer kisses given than where all goes smooth and fair.

Then she blushed with the thought of how all this would sound in words, but justified herself by the thought that she had been sought and won, and to-night she was to hear it from Jamie himself.

That evening she gave more thought and care to her toilet than she had ever done in all her life, combing and brushing her soft hair until its golden threads

looked burnished, pondering over the dress she should wear, and the ribbon she should twine in her hair; and, in the end, choosing her simplest white muslin gown, with a pale blue ribbon in her hair, this being Jamie's favorite color. Her sole ornament was a brooch which Jamie had given her one Christmas long ago, a band of silver twisted into a true lover's knot; and, the while, she said softly to herself: "I ken that Jamie loves me weel; and to-night I will hear it frae his ain lips; and I needna dress mysel' in aught but simple white, for he loves me for mysel' alane. When will he tell me? and what, I wonder, are the words he will say? and oh! what will I say to him? I shall be sair frightened when he tak's me by the hand and says, 'Janet, I hae summat to say to ye.' Then I'll toss my arms about his neck and hide my face on his breast, and say, 'Aye, Jamie, I ken and I lo'e ye wi' my heart's blude.' I canna bear to hear it frae his ain lips; my heart would burst wi' joy, and I should die in his arms. It was kind o' him to send me the message by anither; he knew I couldna thole such joy and live."

And thus her loving fancy wrought out such an explanation of the strange manner of her wooing as would do credit to the tenderness of her lover.

How long the summer day seemed, and yet the quick-coming fancies kept pace with the flying moments; or the old ones served, over and over again, to pass the time.

But at last, as the twilight was falling, she heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs. How faint it made her feel; with what a rush the blood surged through

her veins, while her breath came thick and hard. She sat down, closed her eyes, and, amid the tumult, tried to think. What should she do, go on to meet him, or wait until they called her? Either too great haste or too long delay would be conspicuous; and, while she hesitated, the chance of meeting him at his coming was gone. She heard the retreating steps of his horse, as the groom led him away.

Why did they have such a leaden sound, dreary enough, almost, to bring tears to her eyes?

"Because Jamie is not on him," she thought, and laughed softly to herself; "the very pony feels proud to be his. What winna it be to be his wife? It will gar me step proud and light;" then she blushed again.

When sufficient time had passed for his mother to have a chance to tell him how she was waiting for him to claim her, she came slowly down the stairs and into the reception room next the dining hall, where all the family were assembled listening to the news and messages which Jamie had brought from Kenmuir Hall.

Jamie stood by the mantel, facing the door, booted and spurred from his ride, twirling his riding cap in his hand, with his short velvet riding jacket open on his chest, his cheeks flushed with exercise; one elbow rested on the mantel shelf, and he was looking down on the floor, when Janet caught sight of him.

At the sound of her light step, he lifted his eyes and saw her framed in the doorway; all the rest of the group were sitting with their backs to the door, and so, for a moment, as their eyes met, they were alone.

Janet paused on the threshold—how could she greet him before them all. Her eyes drooped to the floor, her face flushed, her breast heaved—how beautiful she looked, “standing where the brook and river meet,” waiting for her lover.

He started as his eye fell on her, and, at a glance, took in the exceeding beauty of her face and form and the stately grace of her movement; and he thought how many miles he had ridden to-day, and might ride far and wide for many a day, and not find such grace and gentleness, such dignity and sweetness, as met him in the doorway of his own home. There too was his favorite color, and the brooch he had given her at her throat; it was maddening to think how he had let this prize slip through his fingers.

Then he went forward to meet her, and, as she clasped his hand for a moment, she looked up shyly in his face and whispered: “I ken it a’, Jamie; and am very happy, and am waitin’ to hear it frae your ain lips.”

At first he was dumfounded, and then furious. Of what stuff was this girl made? Was there no spark of maiden modesty in her nature, that she prattled, first of her own love affairs, and then assumed to know of his? And who, forsooth, had told of his errand to Kenmuir; or had she chosen to infer it from his few words and, on that slight suggestion, made free to greet him thus. The girl was gone daft on this subject, and assumed that all the world was as crazy as herself.

Poor Janet! how could she guess what a storm her tender little speech had roused. Nor was it any easier

to guess why, when supper was ended, Jamie abruptly rose and left the table, where he had sat silent and moody, and went his way out over the fields and was not seen again that evening.

She went early to her room, under cover of the feminine plea of a headache (which in her case was true enough, with heartache into the bargain), and there wept out the sorrow which could find no other voice than solitary tears.

What did it all mean? He had come forward to meet her, with glowing face, and as she told him that his message was received and gave him the answer to it, with her eyes and the clasp of her hand, his face darkened and he had turned from her, as though spurning her love.

How different the night was from the day.

Then she had recourse to the stronghold of women, "she would wait"—the patience of the saints.

But how hard to be a woman and have to wait, when the soft breath of a word would dispel this cloud of misery.

And as she waited, with her head on the casement sill, for the cool night air to fan it, his step sounded on the walk below, uneasy and restless it seemed to her; every now and then, his heel would come down with a heavy crunch on the hard road, and she knew that he was ill at ease.

Then, in the dim moonlight, she saw him stand, looking toward her window, and raise his hand with a gesture of despair and grind his heel on the road. What did it all mean?

Having borne it for what seemed hours—the clock

would have said fifteen minutes, but, in the darkness, she measured time by the beating of her heart—when the limit of endurance had been reached, she rose and slipped softly down the stairs, and through the great dark hall, with its grim suits of armor looking ghostly in the moonlight and the great boar's tusks grinning at her out of the darkness; but if the hall had been full of demons, she would have made her way, as they do in the fairy tales, by the virtue of the true love that conquers demons. Out through the wide oaken doors she went lightly and swiftly, and, as Jamie turned in one of his restless courses, there in the shadow of the beech tree Janet was standing, just as she stood in the doorway, like a beautiful wraith come to mock his despair. He was startled into the momentary belief that it was a cantrip o' the deil, or that his despair had driven him mad, as he knew that it would.

But gliding swiftly up to him, Janet threw her arms about his neck: "I ken that ye love me, Jamie, and, gin ye are in trouble, my place is at your side."

"What was coming to pass and from whom had this girl the gift of second sight?" This was his first thought; then, quick on the heels of this, his sense of honor reminded him that the kisses of his brother's betrothed were not for his lips.

"Ay, Janet," he groaned, "ye say true; I love ye better than life; better, I sometimes fear, than honor. I love ye to my ain undoin', for I canna live and see ye the bride o' anither."

"And that can never be, my ain Jamie. How could I be yours and yet anither's. I hae been yours,

Jamie, syne ye pinned this brooch on my neck, lang ago. I hae laid it awa' and keepit the bawbie to look on, and vowed that I wad never wear it until you claimed my love, Jamie." And she added archly, "I hae brought it wi' me every time I came to Stoneywold, and never had a chance to wear it until I got your message to-day."

Some light was glimmering in his darkened mind; this was Janet in the flesh, and she loved him and not Thomas; but there were depths still beyond his reach.

"But how did ye ken o' my love for ye, Janet?" he asked, clasping her close to him.

"Your mither gied me the message ye left for me, Jamie," she said, wondering that he should ask her such a question.

"Oh! Aye. I didna ken that she had told you," said Jamie, at a loss to know how his mother could have been the bearer of any such message, after her talk with him; but determined that no cloud should dim Janet's happiness.

"I was sad, at first, to think that I didna hear it frae your ain lips, Jamie," she said, with her hands clasped over his shoulder and looking up in his face. "But ye kenned that my heart wad overflow, and I might faint, or perchance die, in your arms; but I can bear to hear ye tell it noo, Jamie; and ye maun say it aince mair, and leave off that about the undoin' o' it."

So he told it to her over and over, while she drank it in as living water. There were no explanations asked or offered on either side; it was enough that they were all in all to each other.

The moon has looked on countless lovers exchanging vows, but never on a happier pair than this Lowland laddie and his Highland lassie, who exchanged no vows, but simply loved and trusted one another.

After one short hour she left him, and, returning to her casement, looked out on the night—the night so still and cheerful, now—and wondered that the stars did not sing together for joy. She watched him walking up and down, under the shade of the trees, with elastic steps ringing with triumphant joy, and it excited her, made her laugh low and sweet, to think how she had changed his step. His quick ear caught the rippling laugh as it floated out on the night air, and stepping under her window he made her toss him down a kiss, and was only driven away when she threw him the ribbon from her hair to put under his pillow and dream over.

Alas! for the power of the love charm; he dreamed of a vicious colt that he was breaking, who gave him a tumble that hurt his pride and bruised his back; and woke to find that his restless heart had tumbled him out of bed on the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

“YE HAE TIED A KNOT WI’ YOUR TONGUE THAT
YE CANNA UNDO WI’ YOUR TEETH.”

THE night has its dreams and the day its rude awakenings; and on the next morning these lovers saw their dream of the night fade into the light of common day. James took an early opportunity to tell his mother, while Thomas, despising his mother’s counsel, went to tell Janet of his love, and, when she firmly repulsed him, persisted until he forced her, in self-defense, to tell him that she was pledged to James, which she did with mingled pride and modesty, being only half sure that it was indeed true.

Thomas was furious and hurried to take counsel with his mother as to how they might interrupt the course of this love story.

Here, too, he was forestalled, for as he drew near the house he overheard his mother in heated discussion with James.

Thomas thought it prudent to linger and hear the drift of this conversation, as it was well to be posted on all sides of an affair whose turn one could never foretell.

And this is what he heard. James had just announced to his mother that Janet had accepted his proffered love, to which she made answer:

"I winna hear o' it at all, Jamie, and I canna believe that ye are in earnest. I think better o' ye; better o' your head and your heart too, for that matter. Where is your bonnie Annie? Your lips werena cold frae your partin' wi' her and here ye are wi' your cousin in your arms. Do ye court twa lassies at aince, and which wi' your left hand? Ye needna speak; I haena said the half o' what I wish to tell ye. Hae ye no thought for a' that I hae spent in time and patience to win ye a lass wha has a tocher to befit your bride and a place in the society o' the shire that will gie ye a lift. Janet is weel eneuch in her hamely way; but she is frae a rough shire and has a smack o' it in her manners, which doesna befit the bride o' the young Laird o' Stoneywold; and ye canna win our consent to ony sic sorry business." Mrs. Muir's breath was spent, and, as she paused, James answered quietly:

"It is unco late in the day to bring these matters to the fore, whan I hae already plighted my troth to Janet, mither."

"It will be late in a lang day e'er ye hae anither chance to mak' a gomeril o' yoursel', Jamie," answered his mother. "Ye hae nae business plightin' your troth wi'out consultin' your faither or me. And didna ye plight your troth to Annie Elsmere first; and ye maun bide by your promise to her."

"Nay, mither," said James firmly. "I spoke nae word o' love to Annie. I saw her at dinner only, for I rode to the hunt a' the day."

"Ye promised me to court her, when ye left in the

mornin'; and which word am I to believe?" said Mrs. Muir, in a taunting tone.

"Whichever ye choose to believe, mither; but I gave no promise to court her, but only to seek further acquaintance wi' her," said James stoutly.

"And ye sought her acquaintance in the brush, did ye?" retorted Mrs. Muir. "Do ye think that ye ken women and their wiles, laddie? How weel are ye acquaint wi' Janet? I can gie ye a bit o' news anent her. She told me o' her love for Thomas yester morn, when ye rode awa' to your Annie, and by night she has anither tale for your lugs. She'll mak' ye a braw wife wi'out dower or truth," and Mrs. Muir waited for this shot to tell, while, out on the lawn, Thomas grinned.

There was a mystery here; but James would not make any inquiry of his mother. The explanation must come from Janet's lips, and he would accept it against any array of testimony; for, now that he knew of her love, he was ready to trust her without reserve. But it worried him.

"She did not tell ye that she loved Thomas," he said, groping for some solid ground. "Ye wished it to be, and chose to believe that it was so."

"I winna bear such contradiction," said Mrs. Muir sternly. "I went to her room and found her spierin' out at the window for Thomas, and I taxed her wi' it and she confessed it to me; and I will force the confession frae the fause hizzie."

James rose: "I winna hear ye ca' Janet by sic a name, mither. She is to be my wife, and I maun haud her in honor and will listen to nane, no, not my

ain mither, misca' a lassie sae guid and true," and he turned to go.

Mrs. Muir's anger burst all bounds, as she rose to her feet. "If ye ca' a woman guid wha can steal into a family and teach the son o' an ancient and honorable house to forget the duty that God and man haud sacred, the honor o' a son to faither and mither; and if ye ca' her true wha can plight hersel' to ane in the morn and to anither at night, then hae ye learned o' guidness and truth frae ither lips than your ancestors o' Stoneywold; and the lassie sae guid and true is o' ither blude and breedin' frae the leddies o' this house. And I tell ye she shall not enter it as your wife, James Muir, and ye will hear the same frae your faither's lips."

And so they parted, each more firmly set, Mrs. Muir to find her husband and James to seek Janet.

What her husband would say, Mrs. Muir could promise without reservation; for she made him say it. In such affairs as this he did not lay claim to any gifts at disposing of them comparable with hers. Their interview was therefore brief but satisfactory.

"I hae just heard a bit o' astoundin' news frae James," said Mrs. Muir, in a tone that set the old Laird on edge at once. "He has been makin' love to Janet; or she to him, wha kens; and they hae settled their affairs wi'out a by-your-leave to faither or mither."

"Aweel, Helen, I misdoubt ye are pleased wi' the match, to judge by your tone," said Mr. Muir un-easily. "But bairns will be bairns, and we maun let them play at sic matters, as we did in our time."

“I winna let them play at ony sic mixtie-maxtie,” said Mrs. Muir, with added emphasis. “It isna play whan they are sae far grown as these twa coofs; for they arena bairns but man and woman. I hae secured anither match for James, and this lass is for Thomas. I winna hear o’ it.”

“Aweel, Helen, ye ken o’ sic matters, and I ken naething at a’,” said the Laird wearily.

“But ye ken that James needs money to improve the estate, and a wife that can tak’ a lead in the shire,” in a tone that left the old Laird no excuse that he did not know it now. “And I winna bide in the house wi’ the hizzie; and ye will tell James that ye withhold your consent.”

“Aye, Helen, if ye canna bide together, ye surely hae the first right to be considered,” said Mr. Muir soothingly.

“And ye will tell him,” said Mrs. Muir decidedly, “that it isna on my account, but because ye canna approve o’ this matter. Mind ye are firm, James, and let the lad understand it rightly.”

“Aye, Helen, I will,” said the old man wearily; for he had a sore twinge of the gout, and, being worn with pain, was in haste to be through with the discussion. So she had her way, as had happened before.

Her next business was to settle matters with Janet; but here James had been beforehand with her. He had sought Janet immediately after the interview with his mother.

“I hae talked wi’ my mither, Janet, and there are some things I canna understand. She tells me ye were minded to gie your heart to Thomas, and that I

hae interfered to bar your choice; that ye spoke wi' her yester morn owre your love for Thomas when she found ye spierin' for him frae your window."

"And what did ye answer to a' this tale o' the loves o' Janet and Thomas?" she asked, with a mischievous smile; feeling the full assurance of new-born love, reinforced by her lover's plain speech, which showed that his query was, how his mother could have gotten such a notion.

"I couldna answer her," he replied. "She said you confessed your love for Thomas. What does she mean, Janet?"

Then Janet told him the simple truth.

"I sat by the window and wept, as I watched ye ride awa', Jamie, and ye wadna let me gae wi' ye. As I thought o' that and how the bonnie days when we were togither had fled, it garred me weep. Then your mither cam' and said she kenned the story o' my sorrow and bid me dry my tears, for she was fain to welcome me as her daughter. I thought she could mean only you, Jamie, and as I leaned my head on the sill, she guessed my answer frae the color o' my face and neck. Then she said 'We shall hear frae Jamie, to-night'; so I thought to hear the words o' love frae your ain lips, that night—and, after all, I did hear it, Jamie," she said, smiling archly.

Then he saw it all; how she suffered and possessed her soul in patience, and she grew very dear to him.

"Why wadna ye let me ride wi' you, Jamie; and why were ye so changed, sin I came here this time?" said Janet, thinking to have a solution of her riddles.

For a moment Jamie hesitated, for the folly of it

all; then, thinking that this was a time when follies passed current, he said bluntly:

"Because ye wadna kiss me, Janet; and I thought perchance ye were keepin' your lips for a lover."

"And so I was, Jamie; and here is the lover and here are my lips," she said, putting them up for a kiss. "We will break down that bar to the course o' true love," she said laughing, as Jamie kissed her with a zest that showed that the prize had not "lost its charm by being caught."

But here they were interrupted by Lady Stoneywold, who swept in upon them remorselessly, determined to nip this folly in the bud, before it could ripen into mischief.

"James," she said, in her stateliest manner, "I wad speak wi' Janet, and winna keep ye langer frae your duties. We can bear each other company for the rest of the afternoon, whiles ye are mindin' mony things that hae fallen into neglect in the past few weeks."

There was no resisting this tone without forcing a quarrel in Janet's presence, which could do no good and would only cause her pain and distress.

So the old lady froze him out of the room, leaving Janet waiting, in terror, the lingering torture.

"Janet," said Mrs. Muir, in icy tones, "I am bound to set matters right in behalf o' my twa sons, wha are baith deceived by you. In the mornin' ye bid me carry your plighted word to my son Thomas, which I did, and in the evening ye pledge your troth to my eldest son. I can tell ye that I winna hae a double-faced daughter, and claim the right to ken what a' this miserable pother means."

Janet waited a moment and then answered calmly:

"Ye hae right, my Leddy, to ask, and I am unco glad to hae the chance to tell ye the simple truth. I hae plighted my troth to Jamie and to none ither; for I didna gie ye my promise for Thomas in the mornin'."

Mrs. Muir looked her fiercely in the face while she said, in a tone of forced restraint: "Wi' me a lie winna serve ony purpose, however willin' Jamie may be to tak' them aff your rosy lips. It is aye better for women to deal plainly wi' ane anither."

"I hae told ye the truth, and it is my purpose to hae patience to tell it fully, for this is due to mysel'; but when I hae told ye a', I winna bide, my Leddy, to hear my word put in question," said Janet firmly.

"Ye'll hear me speak my mind so lang as ye bide under this roof; and, gin ye canna thole my speech, ye maun gae where I amna free to utter it," said Mrs. Muir, with growing heat.

"I didna tell ye that I loved Thomas," said Janet, looking the furious lady full in the eye. "I told you in the morn what I told Jamie at night, that I loved only him." Mrs. Muir grew hot and restless. "Bide wi' patience, my Leddy," said Janet, in a tone so quiet that it controlled Mrs. Muir, "and I will tell ye a'. I hae loved Jamie for years. When I cam' here, this time, and he wasna the same and rode awa' to Kenmuir and wadna let me gae wi' him, I watched him out o' sight, wi' tears. Then you cam' and said ye kenned my heart and wad welcome me as a daughter; I thought only on Jamie, and whan ye said that we should hear frae him to-night, I was verra willin'. I

winna weary you, my Leddy, but I wad hae ye ken that the women o' our house are as true as the men are brave. I wadna lie, even to win Jamie."

All this, spoken in a suppressed, earnest tone and with simple dignity, did not soothe Mrs. Muir. In proportion as she was forced to believe it, she was maddened by it; and, as it exalted Janet, it made her the more dangerous.

"This may answer for you, as an afterthought, whan ye hae plunged us into a bog frae which there isna escape, for a', unscatched. I hae accepted Thomas for ye and ye hae had some idle love clavers wi' James. Now I maun settle the matter for the guid o' a' three. James is already provided for, and he has a pretty way wi' the lasses, and this is not his first affair o' the kind; so we needna fash oursel's owre him. But puir Thomas hasna sic guid luck wi' the damsels, and therefore ye had, by a' means, better tell James to continue his suit wi' Annie Elsmere, and just let Thomas ken that he can follow ye to Ross."

So the mother plead for the rejected son, taking the worldly-wise tone, assuming that a sensible girl would not let this romantic folly enter into the discussion of a serious question.

"But, my Leddy, I canna so dispose o' my heart, which wouldna do my biddin' and is nae mair my ain; for I hae gien it to Jamie," said Janet, as though her love, once given, was no more a part of herself. Such downright simplicity was terribly baffling.

"I am afraid ye hae been readin' foolish love ditties, written to mislead silly lassies. It is weel

eneuch to turn a rhyme wi' sic nonsense, but when a lassie comes to choose her place in life, she maun hae respect to the wishes and counsels o' her elders, and use her ain wits in the bargain. I'll see to it that James returns ye the gift o' your heart, along wi' the tress o' hair and ither trinkets which he, doubtless, has; and we'll settle this matter for the guid o' all concerned," said Mrs. Muir, implying the acceptance of her sound common sense, as a matter of course.

"Jamie has naething but my heart, my Leddy. I hae naught else to gie; but that gift I canna recall if I wad, and I wadna if I could," said Janet, with rising tears in her voice.

This was too much for Mrs. Muir.

"Janet, lass, I hae told ye how the door is open to welcome ye as a daughter o' this house, but ony ither way the door is shut," and she stamped her foot. "Aye, and my Laird has barred the door; and the ban o' a mither's righteous indignation is on ye, gin ye turn awa' the heart o' my first born son frae his faither and mither, teachin' him to despise the first o' God's commandments wi' a blessin' on it. If ye haena the heart to stop your uncanny cantrips, then let the fears o' conscience keep ye in the path o' righteousness. In the name o' the Laird o' Stoneywold and o' the Lord our God, I forbid ony thought o' marriage between you, a puir Highland lass, and the heir o' this house."

"Ye can speak for the Laird o' Stoneywold, my Leddy," said Janet haughtily, "but as to the Lord our God, forgie me if I doubt that ye are empowered to declare His will. I owe you, my Leddy, no obe-

dience in this matter, and winna abide by your word alane."

"Ye'll abide by my word or ye canna bide in this house," said Mrs. Muir hotly.

"I am your guest only at your pleasure, my Leddy," answered Janet.

"Aweel, ye hae earned my sair displeasure, and ye maun choose your ain time to gae hame," and Mrs. Muir swept from the room.

Janet's brief love dream was ruthlessly dispelled, and though loyalty to James had sustained her through the stormy interview, when it was over she sank down pale and panting and gave herself up to a passion of tears.

A father's and mother's keen displeasure was no portent of blessing to their union, and was in fact an impassable barrier. There was that in Mrs. Muir's tone which betokened not a hasty ebullition of anger, but a settled purpose to stamp out this foolish fancy; and so, for them, this was the end.

She therefore set herself to go back to her Highland home, take up her simple duties, forget the thrilling happiness of the past two days, and lay away the brooch forever out of sight. Knowing that John Gunn was going to Braemar on the morrow, and, perhaps, could take her all the way, she set about her preparations for the journey, and, when she was all ready, felt a comfortable independence of Mrs. Muir's wrath; but none the less dreaded the pain of parting with her lover.

Was it not better, however, to drain the dregs of this cup in one sweet bitter draught and then go home

to let her life ebb out by inches, to die at heart while the body lived on.

She found Jamie pacing under the trees in front of the house, waiting for her, and he sprang to greet her.

"I hae waited for ye a sair lang while," he said lightly; and then, as he saw her pale face, "I am afraid ye hae spent the time to poor purpose, gin it has made ye look sae wan a maiden, wha has lost her lover."

For Janet's full heart there was no delay possible; "I haena lost my lover, Jamie; but he is taen frae my arms. Your mither has told me that we canna wed; and your faither, too, she says, will forbid the banns;" and she laid her head on Jamie's shoulder and wept bitterly.

"Janet, my mither has taen some foolish notion anent my marriage wi' ane and anither o' the damsels, wha are nae mair minded to wed me than am I to seek them. And whan these cobwebs are brushed out o' her brain, she will heed what I hae to say about my ain wife," said James, in a positive tone, as much to fortify himself as to reassure Janet.

"Na, na, Jamie, I ken it is mair than a whim that moves her. She will have you marry anither, and will have me marry Thomas, and she winna listen to me or to you," said Janet, looking things squarely in the face.

"Aweel then, Janet, she may close her ears, till she opens them to hear the minister declare us man and wife, for that we are to be; and the mair dinsome clamor she mak's owre it, the quicker it shall come to pass," said James, in a lordly way.

"That canna be, Jamie," said Janet wearily. "Nae wife can bring a blessin' to a man, wha bids him break the Lord's command to honor faither and mither."

"She has been preachin' to ye, has she?" said James, now furious. "'Ye ken the proverb, 'When an auld wife preaches the deil gies out the text.'"

"Hush, Jamie," said Janet, laying her hand on his lips; which reproof he met with a kiss. "I hae done ye nae guid, gin I hae taught ye to speak thus o' your ain mither. We must bide a wee and not fash oursel's. Whan ye hae waited for blessin's they are aye sweeter than those which come wi'out the seekin' and longin' for them."

"Women may wait and long, but it is for men to strive and win," said James stoutly. "I winna bide by a woman's word in matters in which they hae nae concern. I will see my faither, and gin he winna listen to me, I'll turn my back on this place and win a hame for oursel's in Ross."

"That canna be, Jamie; your faither is old and ailin' and your mither needs your arm to lean on; your oughtlin's bind you here, and I canna ask you to forsake a' that God has set you to do, and the place where he has put ye, to gang wi' me. We arena happy, Jamie, when we try to rob our blessin's frae our duties." And the brave girl fought her lover and her own heart, at the same time.

"But, Janet, ye are my promised wife; and the Guid Book bids a man forsake faither and mither and gae wi' his wife," said James, prepared to see this duty and to do it with his might.

"Ah! no, Jamie," she said, smiling sadly, "I am

not your wife, and the story o' our love which we hae told ane anither canna be set against the rights o' faither and the mither that bore ye. Their consent is needed to sanction your promise to me."

Then the hot young lover began to chafe under the quiet, irresistible temper of this woman, who could see one side of this question so clearly as to close her heart to his pleading. Her policy of waiting was maddening to his strong, ardent nature. He wanted things settled on the instant, and, not unlike his mother, settled to suit his way of thinking. So he turned on this patient Griselda, with the accusation that her love had not the sterling quality to stand the test of trial, and that she lacked the nerve to meet his imperious mother.

"Ye are easily driven to forego your troth, Janet, when my mither doesna speak ye fair. I thought there was a higher power o' love in ye than that."

She looked at him steadily, while the tears rose slowly from the depths of her sorrow, her cheek grew a shade paler, and she seemed to tower in height, as she said, in a calm, searching tone, "I didna expect to hear that frae your lips, Jamie."

It pierced him to the marrow, and he yielded, without another word; and, being conquered, submitted to be led by her, whose heart he saw was greater than his, and her counsel, therefore, in such a case was wiser.

CHAPTER IX.

“THERE’S A TIME TO GLEY, AND A TIME TO LOOK STRAIGHT.”

THE passing years bound John Gunn more firmly to the interests of the Stoneywold estate. James having grown up under his eye, put implicit trust in this preceptor of his youth.

As the old Laird failed, the management of the estate fell to John, and James, as he grew older, took a share in it, and thus saw more of John and Helen than he did of his own family; and little “Nell” (as the younger Helen was called) retained her childish admiration for James.

Outside the estate John became a man of consequence. His charge of improvements at Stoneywold gave him an experience that made him an authority on such matters, and a deference to his opinion was shown by the gentry, which gave him a most honorable position.

The recollection of his past life was sometimes uncomfortable, and it became almost a necessity to slacken the ties that bound him to his gypsy friends.

Helen fully appreciated the honor of John’s position, and saw that better things were in store for “Nell” than if they had continued in the tents of her

forefathers, and she dreaded to hear that the band was in the neighborhood.

Gordon McDonald was settled in the neighboring village of Kintore, and with him had come old Sandy Brown, the minister's man, who was a weaver by trade, and, as he plied the shuttle, a great philosopher, political reformer, and theologian, as these Scottish "websters" are apt to be.

With him John and Helen had formed a firm friendship, founded perhaps on the law of contrast, or due to some subtle tie which did not appear on the surface; for Sandy was a sturdy adherent of the House of Hanover, and John a stanch Jacobite; Sandy was a sound, uncompromising Calvinist; John was of a very uncertain creed, accepting general principles, but resisting any definite form of belief—a very easy-going Christian, even if he would submit to be classed under so broad a category as this.

These two had abundant opportunity for "cracks" with one another, and an unfailing supply of subjects.

Many an evening the old webster passed enlightening John on the great doctrines which have been the bone and sinew of Scottish theology for generations; and when he and John got at it, the sparks flew. The battles were hot but not bitter, for they respected one another, and they were true friends.

Sandy loved Nell with a great, rugged tenderness, for he was a lonely old man bereft of wife and weanie, and his heart went out to this winsome, dark lassie, with her gentle ways. His grim, wrinkled face, with scant frosty locks hanging elf-like beside it, was lit with smiles of welcome as she bounded to meet him,

and the gift of a trinket or a bit that he had woven for her bodice always marked his visits.

On Sabbath afternoons he trudged over to the cottage and sat with Nell by the Don side, telling her Bible stories with his own quaint homilies upon them. After supper he had worship, reading the chapter and giving out the psalm in the old Scotch fashion, line by line, and, with lusty voice, raising the tune with great unction and to his own satisfaction; his hearers meanwhile looking on in wonder. Then, kneeling with them, he poured forth such strong and simple thanksgiving, confession, and petition, as won their way to his hearers' hearts, by their undoubted genuineness.

They loved this old Covenanter, with his firm belief, his consistent character, and breadth of feeling.

The evenings were passed in having cracks with John.

"A man's belief is sma' matter gin his life is right," was a favorite maxim of John's. To which Sandy's answer was: "Aye, but there is the root o' the matter, John. We maun ken the truth gin we wad bide by it. Gin ye are settled on the fundamentals, ye hae a solid footin'; but, gin ye are in a bog o' uncertainty yoursel' it is nae kindness to drag your neebor in, until ye are baith flounderin' up to your necks in the quagmire;" and this was always the wager for a stout battle.

Through Sandy they came to know Gordon McDonald, and his visits were very welcome, for his humor and broad humanity put him as near to the cotters as he was to the gentry, and he became their firm friend.

While such associations were being formed by John and Helen, Charlie Graham was giving the Lochgellie band an unsavory reputation. He ruled them rigorously, and in the main justly, and none felt the weight of his cudgel oftener than his six wives, whose brawls were famous through all the country.

The eldest and, by right of priority, the head of this seraglio was Snippy Brown, whose real name, Lizzie, was supplanted by the *nom de guerre* which she had won in her heroic struggle with her associates in the home and heart of Charlie. In his absence she had assumed the place of director of the household, as being the bell-wether of the flock, which was represented by the others, and, in enforcing her claims, one of those internal feuds was set going, for which the band had of late become famous.

The rest of the band stood impartially by while old Lizzie undertook, with Charlie's cudgel, to set in order the rest of Charlie's wives, after the fashion in which he himself kept house. Of these others who had thus banded themselves feloniously to resist her authority, some trusted to nature's weapons, but one more savage than the others, being armed with a knife, cut the end of old Lizzie's nose clean off.

Nothing daunted by the trifling loss nor by the flow of blood, she clapped her left hand on the wounded member, and, shouting "In the middle o' the meantime where is my nose," stayed not the cudgel till she had routed her foes, being generous in the share which she bestowed on her of the carving knife.

She showed herself with pride to Charlie, on his return, as a wife worthy of his name, and bore hence-

forth the sobriquet of "Auld Snippy," as a badge of honor. The honors of victory made full amends for the trifling loss to her appearance; for, after this, no one questioned her right to rule "when Charlie was awa'."

But more than once John was seriously compromised by his quondam associates, who insisted on their right to appeal to him, because he could enforce his authority over the most turbulent spirits, or remand them to jail. But while he could thus control them in special crises, yet his moral influence was no longer a factor in the tribe. Charlie Graham was far more to their liking, for he had the true gypsy instinct of plunder, in season and out of season, which John had always striven to moderate.

The band was a terror through the southern counties, where they carried on a systematic robbery in connection with the Border bands. The horses in Scotland were driven to the Border, where the Yetholm band received them for sale in England, exchanging horses stolen in England to be sold in Scotland by the Lochgellies.

Charlie lived like a prince, paying his way at the inns with such generous fees to the servants and noble reckoning for the landlord that he was under their protection.

The traveler's only warning, when Charlie was on the road, was that he had better bide at the inn to-night as "the road was foul."

The country people were so used to his doings that when the canty traveler, having heard that "the road was foul," came to a convenient spot where the woods

on either side of the road afforded a fine ambush, he would put spurs to his nag and gallop through the hollow, and, if he was aware of a stir in the bushes, would laugh and shout back : "Ah! Charlie boy, ye hae missed your chance this time."

But this was only among the farmer lads, whom Charlie had treated at the fair, or done some generous deed of which they had heard, or themselves been the recipients.

His hand was bold to take, but free to give, and while prosperity always stirred his desire to relieve its plethora, so distress moved him to alleviate its straits. So he robbed the rich and gave to the poor. This naturally created two prevalent types of popular sentiment regarding this bold gypsy chief; and John often warned him that he was laying up a store of trouble for himself and the band; and, when Charlie told of his friends at the inns and by the wayside, John would reply:

"These will do nought for ye, Charlie, when ye are before the baillies, wi' the lairds and their factors to bear witness against ye."

"They can witness nae evil against me," said Charlie stoutly. "I hae taen naething frae the puir and hae always spared them wha couldna afford to lose; and, when Davie Brown cam' to me and told me how the ten pound which the lads had taen frae him at the fair was needit to keep his farm, and he wad lose house and hame gin he hadna the pelf; then I gave it a' back again and added to it five pound that I had taen frae his laird; and surely, John, ye may ca' that just and fair dealin'."

It was in vain that John tried to show him that the lairds and their factors had as good right to their money as the poor man to his few pounds.

Charlie could not or would not see this. "It has aye been the law o' the land," said the bold gypsy; "and your ain forbears did the same by their neebors. When Scotland was a free land, ruled by her ain kings and brave chieftains, then a man aye took what he needed and held it by his ain braid claymore till a better man than he could tak' it frae aff him. But those were the guid auld days."

Whatever may have been the source of Charlie's information as to ancient Scottish usage, his ideas of the rights of property no longer held in the land, and were mightily unpopular with the class that suffered from the application of his peculiar theories of *meum et tuum*.

The Laird of Glenshiels, when visiting Stoneywold, was loud in denunciation of the "thieving vagabonds."

He had purchased a bullock of a choice breed at a bargain because, by some accident, the animal had lost nearly half of its tail. On this fat bullock Charlie had cast his eye, as in good condition to grace a revel which he proposed to hold. So one morning early he hied him to the pasture, having provided himself with the tip of the tail of another animal of the same color, and, neatly making fast the necessary completion to the bullock, drove off his booty. Scarce had he reached the ford of the Don when the baillie o' the Laird of Glenshiels overtook the bold robber and charged him with the theft.

"Look at him well," said the cunning gypsy, "and tell me, can ye swear it is your bullock?" and he appealed to a passing farmer and his gillie to be judges at this wayside assize.

The baillie scanned the bullock with a puzzled air; "I could swear to him as our bullock by his hoofs, his horns, and a' his points, werena his tail sae lang; but our beastie had lost nigh one-half o' his tail."

He was dismounting to take a closer look when Charlie whipped out his knife, cut off the tail just above the joint, thus drawing blood, flung the end of the tail far out into the water, and facing the baillie cried out, indignantly: "Noo he has a short tail; swear to him, man, and be hanged to ye."

Then he rode down the bank and led the bullock over the ford, without deigning further parley, save, as he went up the farther bank, to call to the discomfited baillie: "Bid the Laird o' Glenshiels, wi' my compliments, to send a man after his rovin' cattle wha kens them by some ither mark than the length o' their tails, which is as kittle a way as to ken a man by the length o' his coat," and he laughed merrily; but, none the less, he had made two powerful enemies, and the Laird was sure that the Lochgellie band had feasted on his red bullock.

Charlie gave this same baillie cause to remember him once again. There was a certain poor widow, Kirstin, in whose humble cot Charlie found refuge when he had need to keep out of harm's way for a while. As he lay in hiding there, he heard this baillie in the kitchen threatening that if the rent were not ready by the next evening, when he would pass

that way, he would put her out of the cot. When he was gone, Kirstin came to Charlie in tears.

"Ye maun find anither place to stop," she said, "for I am to be sent awa' for lack o' the rent. Alack, it is not blithe for you, and for me it is a sair bitter dool."

"If that be a' your trouble," said Charlie, "it is easier mended than mony are," and he drew out his purse and counted her out the two pounds.

"But I canna pay ye back," said Kirstin, "and hae nae pledge to gie ye."

"I want nae pledge but your promise to pay me when ye can;" and Charlie stayed the old woman's tearful blessing by leaving the room.

He lay in hiding till the next afternoon and then bid the widow good-by, and, secreting himself in a copse by the roadside, awaited the return of the baillie, with the rent in his pouch.

Along he came at an easy jog, and out sprang Charlie; but he did not find his man so easy to manage in a tussle as he was to deal with on the points of a bullock, for the baillie made a stout resistance and shouted lustily for help. It was a hand to hand struggle, for Charlie had not brought his cudgel and would not use the knife on an unarmed man, and for such a paltry sum. So the wrestle was a long one; the baillie was a powerful man, but at last Charlie had the purse safe in hand. The sound of approaching footsteps warned him that discretion had better keep pace with valor, so he beat a hasty retreat through the woods to old Kirstin's cot. He released her from the promise she had given, telling her that a friend of

hers, who did not wish his name to be known, had met him on the road and paid the debt.

Off went the baillie and reported his loss to the Laird, who set out with him at once down the road to find trace of the robber.

A little way this side of the copse they met a farmer, who in passing had picked up the bonnet which Charlie had lost in the tussle and had put it on his head.

The baillie, in the uncertain light of the gloaming, promptly fixed on the farmer as the guilty party and swore that he knew him surely.

On the morrow it was noised abroad that Farmer Haddon, well-known through all the shire as an honest man, come of honest folk, and an elder of the Kirk, was to be tried for robbing the baillie of Glen-shiels.

It made a great stir, and old Kirstin was full of the news when Charlie came out of his room next morning, in a new attire which completely changed his aspect.

"They do say," said the old widow, "that he is owin' a sum to the Laird; and, perchance, the deil hae temptit him to pay it after this fashion, and it wasna in his power to say 'Gang ahint me, Satan.' But I am wae for the gudeman, for he was aye kind to me, and remembers the widow and the faitherless; and that is a bonnie token o' a Christian."

So off set Charlie to see what would come of this, and whether he could do anything for this friend of the friendless.

He sat in court and listened to the trial, which was

brief, and the drift of it all against the poor man, who was too much dazed to say anything in his own defense, and could only wring his hands and cry, "Wae is me, my Lairds. I come o' God-fearin' folk, and I hae robbit nae man;" but there was nothing to be gotten from him as to how he came by the cap, save only: "I pickit the bonnet frae the dust. Oh! wae is me that my gray hairs shall lie in a dishonored grave."

On the other hand, the Laird was there to testify that Farmer Haddon owed him a sum of money, and had asked for indulgence as to time, and that he might pay it in instalments, one of which was due to-morrow.

Then came the baillie's turn to testify. He told of his collection of the rent from the widow, "Wham," he added, in a significant tone, "I am gien to understand, your Lairdship, is a verra speecial freend o' this man; and wham he has helpit, frae time to time, to pay her rent, the meanwhile asking for time on his ain behalf."

By old John Haddon's side, with her hand in his, sat his silver-haired wife. They "had clomb the hill thegither," and she was ready to go with him to prison and to death; for she knew why he had to ask for time to pay his debt, while he saved the widow's home from desolation. Her tears fell softly as she thought how the very good that he had done was being reckoned up against him, in this hour of trial, and she prayed silently, "Lord, let not this thing be."

But the judge cut short the flow of the baillie's eloquence, and bid John Haddon stand up and put

the unlucky bonnet on his head, and asked the baillie to declare upon his solemn oath whether this were the man who robbed him, and whether he were sure that he knew him, reminding him that it was a solemn thing to swear away, in one brief sentence, the character which a man had won by sixty years of a blameless life, in all of which there had been not a whisper against him. There was silence in the court while the baillie looked John fiercely in the eye, and he returned the gaze with that steady clearness which cannot be simulated; and the sweet, sad face of his good wife was bent down in prayer.

"Aye, my Lairds," answered the baillie, "I can swear to him. I wrastled lang wi' him and wad ken him surely amang a thousand."

Amid the stifled hush of the crowded courtroom, Charlie Graham strode forward, snatched the bonnet from the old man's head, and, putting it on, stepped up close to the baillie and said: "Now tak' a guid lang look at me, sir, another honest man, and tell me, on the oath ye hae just sworn, am not I the man wha robbit ye?"

The baillie looked aghast. "By Heaven, ye are the verra man, and I——"

"Haud your tongue, lecin' carle!" said Charlie; then, turning to the judge: "Ye see, my Laird, what a ready memory this gentleman has; he swears by the bonnet, whatever face is under it. He has sworn awa' the character o' twa honest men, and, gin your Lairdship will put the bonnet on your ain head, he wad be quick to swear that your Lairdship had robbit him. And, my Laird, is there ony evidence

at all that the man was robbit, save his ain leein' lips?"

So the chief witness being confounded, the accusation fell through.

John Haddon and his wife went, hand in hand, from court amid the congratulations of their neighbors, and the honest old man said: "There was sic a byke o' hornets in that bonnet that I will aye leave sic gear in the dust, for them to lift wha haena gray hairs or ony character to lose."

His gentle wife said naught to man, but thanked God unceasingly in her heart.

The crestfallen baillie retired, amid the scowls of his neighbors, thinking to himself (why, he could not tell) that he had lost this man just as he lost that red bullock; while Charlie, waiting for neither thanks nor congratulations, slipped quietly through the crowd and left the neighborhood for a while.

But such victories were bad for Charlie, making him confident that he could defy detection; and as he grew bolder his depredations were on a larger scale. He played the gentleman at the inns, and the revels at the camp were on a grander scale, his young men being only too eager to ape the fashion set by their leader. The heavier drafts on his exchequer necessitated more frequent levies on those who were the custodians of his funds.

It came to pass that no man's pocket was secure at a country fair, and no road safe after nightfall, and a man had much ado to keep his horses in his own barn.

Two or three times John Gunn had been sum-

moned to court, by members of the band, to find Charlie up for horse-stealing, with his neck very near the noose. He bore himself with such reckless ease and grace, that he often won a smile from the judges; and the country people regarded it as a show not to be missed, when Charlie was up for trial.

"Well, Charlie," the judge would say, looking sternly at the handsome scapegrace. "You before the court so soon again! What is it this time?"

"The auld thing again, my Laird, but nae proof." And sure enough so it would turn out; for though the man could swear his horse was stolen, yet his description of the thief in no way tallied with the handsome gentleman with small hands and feet, gallant bearing and gay attire, who stood before the court.

Or, if the description tallied too closely, then some innkeeper from a far corner of the shire, or some poor widow or farmer of undoubted respectability, was on hand to swear that the said Graham (or Anderson, as he was known to him) had passed the night in question under his roof, and had not ridden away until noon of the next day; and that innkeeper or farmer so testifying had never to complain of the loss of even a bit of poultry, no matter how long the Lochgellie band lingered near his place.

Charlie often boasted that the kind of hemp that would hang him did not grow on Scottish soil; and so he laughed at John.

But the longest lease runs out; and at last Charlie found a net spread for his feet whose meshes were too strong for him.

Thrice he had escaped from the hands of the con-

stables, rather than risk a tilt with the judges, who were growing less complaisant. Once he slipped out of the manacles, leaving them securely locked, just where his hands and feet had rested on the bed, and letting himself down from the window by a small cord, which he wore underneath his sash, quietly slipped off in the night, while the sentry paced before the door of his room at the inn. And when they came in the morning to take him on to the tolbooth, there lay the manacles where his hands and feet had been—and all agreed that it must have been a bogie which they had in chains the night before.

The second time, he besought his captors not to put him in the tolbooth, when they had him at the very door, but to come and pass the night with him in an upper room at the inn, where they could help him drink up the little money that he had about him, which would do no one any good in the jail.

To this reasonable proposal he won their assent, and they all repaired to a second-story room at the inn, and, with the door locked and bolted, the four constables and Charlie prepared to spend the night. He plied them well with liquor, and as the room grew hot asked one of the constables to raise a window, he remaining quietly on the other side of the room. As they drank far into the night Charlie told them stirring tales of his adventures, and, walking back and forth in the excitement of the narration, took a sudden turn and leaped through the window, fifteen feet to the ground, and was off in the darkness before the fuddled constables could find the key, which they had hidden, and, with fumbling fingers, unlock the door.

These adventures were charming fireside tales, but they made Charlie's standing in court that of a fugitive from justice.

He had lately received a heavy consignment of English horses to sell, and felt himself in honor bound to return a fair equivalent, which compelled him to make a larger levy than usual; too large, as it proved, for the state of the market.

A hue and cry was raised, headed by Charlie's old acquaintance, the baillie of Glenshiels, and warmly seconded by the Laird.

This time they made thorough work of it, and Charlie with four other of the men and four of the women of the band were taken, and, without more ado, clapped into the tolbooth at Middenmuir and brought to speedy trial.

The indictment set forth several charges:

"First: That of being Egyptians, which is, *seperatum*, revelant to infer the pain of death or banishment from Scotland.

"Second: Several acts of thieving and picking, herein set forth; with the witnesses thereto.

"Third: Beating and striking with an invasive weapon."

Against the particulars of this bill of indictment, with the witnesses of the several counts, Charlie's old plea of "nae proof" did not avail. There was plenty of proof as to the thefts of the horses, and the heads of the constables bore witness to the stout resistance made to the officers of the law; nor were Charlie's brave deeds any recommendation to the mercy of the court.

They were found guilty, and, as the finding of the court quaintly put it, "Whereas it is both inconvenient and troublesome to hold them longer in the toll-booth, therefore it is declared that, with all convenient dispatch, they be taken to Aberdeen; and that Charles Graham, John Kerr, William Shaw, and John Keith be hanged by the neck; and that Helen Yorkton, Lucretia Ogilvie, Eppie Lundie, and Lizzie Brown be drowned in the sea; and that thus the good repute of our shire be holpen, by the deliverance from the marauding of thieves and the cantrips of witches."

Such was the report brought to John Gunn by Helen, who came from the trial wild with horror at the result.

John, though loath to meddle with that which had come about in spite of his remonstrance, at once set about devising means to avert the fate hanging over his friends.

He sent at once to Braemar and ordered all the women and children out of the shire; then he quartered the most trusty young men, by twos and threes, on friends in the neighborhood, bringing two of them to his own cot, and disposing some of them in the woods; he had altogether about fifteen men at his command.

He had no trouble in finding out the plans of the magistrates; for one of the constables did not hesitate to speak freely with a man of John Gunn's standing in the community. John took care that the report of the flight of the band should be well circulated, and thus lull to rest all fears of an attempt at rescue.

To his friend the constable John suggested that, as

the removal of the prisoners would make some stir, it might be as well to do it quietly by night, and avoid the gathering of a crowd of the country people, among whom there would surely be some friends of Charlie. "For Charlie is a weel-spoken lad, wi' a glib tongue; and, sin it isna a question o' merely housin' the carle out o' harm's way for a while, but gleys to the stretchin' o' his neck, there be some, wha arena gypsies, wha wad help him to escape; for it is a sair waefu' thing to see a bonnie carle strung up like a dog."

So the night was fixed on for the transfer, and John helped in the preparations, as well as counseled with the constables.

They started just after nightfall, with the women in one cart ahead, and the men following in another cart; there were eight constables, all armed and holding fast the ropes that bound the gypsies in pairs, with manacles on their wrists and ankles.

Little was said as they rode along; the constables were uneasy and the gypsies downcast, for they had held no intercourse with the outside world, and knew nothing of any plan for their relief.

The early hours of the night were past and the moon, which had dimly lighted their way, was set; it was nearing midnight, and Auld Snippy, who had been dozing, was roused by the roar of the Don water, as the road wound nearer to the stream.

"Did ye hear the kelpie ca', Eppie Lundie? We will see a sight this nicht which will mak' the hair o' your head creep!"

"Haud your clavers, ye auld witch wife, or I'll send the tip o' your tongue to keep company wi' the end o'

your neb!" said one of the constables, who already had an uncomfortable feeling about the roots of his hair.

"It is ill to chide a spaewife whan ye are wi'in grip o' the kelpie," retorted Snippy, apt to play the part which the gypsies knew was their strong one.

"Haud your eldritch tongue, ye auld deil's wife!" shouted the constable, beginning to hear strange noises in the water, and the tread of elfin feet in the woods.

Auld Snippy, wild with rage, screamed: "If I be a deil's wife, they say the deil is aye guid to his ain; and ye'll rue the day that ye started to tak' the deil's wife to the toll-booth o' Aberdeen!" Then she shrieked, at the top of her voice, "Oh! bonnie black bridegroom, come to me noo, and break aff my bonds, and bind them wha hae bound me! Help! Help!" she screamed.

Out from the woods, as if in answer to her summons, there swarmed dark forms that seemed to rise from the ground; their name was legion, their leader a tall, swart figure, with two great horns and a long, writhing tail—so swore the constables, when they told the story of the rescue of the gypsies at the Don ford.

The guard fled, leaving the women in the hands of these imps of darkness; but there was a slight recovery of courage among those in charge of the men, and these were not rescued without a desperate struggle, in which one constable was severely wounded, and, of the attacking party, poor Tam Ruthven was shot and killed outright, which stopped the bow of one of the best fiddlers in all that region; but it was a better

death than twanging a hempen cord, which seemed sadly inappropriate to one who had played so many a merry air on the catgut. At all events, so it came to pass, without Tam's choice, which would probably have been in favor of escaping both these kinds of untimely taking off and dying "the death of the righteous," which was a favorite quotation with poor Tam. He had read it on a headstone, in a quiet country kirkyard, and the tuneful sentence was the only bit of Scripture that stuck by him. Why this had found lodgment among the vagaries of his queer cranium, he could not have told, but he was fond of repeating, at odd moments: "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his."

In the darkness and scuffle, John came off not wholly unscathed, for a blow from a constable's cudgel fell on his outstretched forearm and broke it, about half-way between the elbow and the wrist. But they cheated the gallows of its prey and the sea of some of its dead.

John started them off at once southward, warning them to travel by night only, to lodge with none but Egyptians, and to remain in close hiding with their friends in Yetholm until they went into winter quarters at Little Carron.

They were very grateful and very docile, now; for they had seen death face to face, and had even gone so far as to discuss what lay in store for them after death, during which discussion Charlie Graham faced the future calmly, avowing his belief that it could not go hard with a man who had done all the good which he could reckon to his credit; and, when this was

called in question, cited as examples of his meritorious deeds, his robbing of the baillie to pay the rent of the poor widow, and his bewildering the baillie so that he could not identify the robber, thus delivering John Haddon, who must otherwise have gone to prison; and it was generally agreed among them that a man who could point to such a shining record had little cause for fear.

John Gunn made his way home wearily; for his arm was very painful and made him feel faint and spent, after the hard battle. He reached his cottage just as the day broke, and found Helen watching for him, and aghast at his pale, weary face, which boded ill tidings.

But the tidings were not so ill as feared; though it was sad to think of poor Tam, who, as master of the revels, had made them all so merry, shot down without warning, and buried in the dark forest by night.

John solaced her with a rough and ready philosophy: "It mak's sma' difference how we die, Helen. The great question is how hae we lived; and Tam died as a brave man may ever be glad to die, in the heat o' battle for his friends."

Then Helen saw how limp John's arm hung by his side.

"Ye arena well, John. What ails ye?" she said, for his face grew paler, now that the excitement was over.

"It is naething o' ony moment," said John. "'Ane o' those gillies whacked me a bit on the arm.'"

But as he tried to raise it, he grew paler still; Helen felt it and found that it was broken; and a

look of pain came on her face, as if she and not John were wounded.

With fingers skilled by experience, she set herself to bind up the broken arm, so deftly and gently that John was to be congratulated on having such a surgeon. Her touch was light and firm, not flinching when she saw his pain, knowing that the sooner it was over the better for him, and for her too. Then she gave him some hot gruel, put him to bed and hovered about him, thankful that it was Tam Ruthven's turn and not her John's to be laid under the greenwood tree.

There was a grand stir the next day when the news of the escape of the gypsy felons was noised abroad. It was a fine tale to recount, by the cotter's peat fire, how the beldame "Auld Snippy had called up the kelpie and bogies and the deil himsel', and he cam' wi' flamin' eyes, wi' twa great horns and a lang writhin' tail, spittin' tongues o' flame frae his mouth;" but, with the magistrates and gentry of the shire, the cracked crowns and bruises of some of the constables were credited to more carnal weapons than are wielded by the spirits of the water and the air; the flames had not singed a hair of their heads, but they bore the countersign of oak cudgels, and an unquestionably earthly bullet was found in the thigh of one of the constables.

They were brought before the magistrates and examined separately, having been kept in the meanwhile in close confinement. A grand history of the methods of spiritual warfare, with details of "bogle-wark," could have been framed from their testimony if that

had been the object of the magistrates' inquiry; but, as one shrewd old laird, who had a wide experience upon the bench for thirty years, said, "There is nae doot, my Lairds, that the deil was at the bottom o' it, but we maun ken what scum was on the top o' the pot; and, by my life, I propose to skim the froth till I find it oot, and then we will het it up for them."

It needed much sifting, with patience and sound judgment, to know the difference between the honest truth and the honest falsehood which these witnesses told. For some did honestly believe that they had fulfilled the Scripture: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers and against the rulers of the darkness of this world;" and wondered that they bore no "mark o' the deil's tap."

After patient investigation the magistrates made sure of three facts; first, that one of the rescuers was killed; second, that the leader, the Mephistopheles of the play, had fallen under a blow from one of the constables; third, that no one knew of the hour of their departure from Middenmuir except the steward of the Laird of Stoneywold.

The constable who confessed to telling him was severely reprimanded and ordered to jail for thirty days, after which he was to be paraded through the town with a placard on his back, bearing the inscription, "Trust him not; he babbleth!" Then the magistrates ordered that John Gunn be brought before them to be examined touching the escape of certain prisoners.

When the sheriff came to Stoneywold, on such an errand, it raised a mighty clamor. The old Laird

fumed, and stormed at him as a minion of the House of Hanover. It was never known in the time of Scotland's own kings that such dishonor was done a Laird on his own estate as to hale his chief, trusty retainer before the court to answer an infamous charge. If the good old times were here, and his retainers armed, he would hang the sheriff and send his head to the hireling judges. He bid the young Laird make ready and go with John, if it must needs be.

The sheriff bore it patiently, for he had known the old Laird when he was more amenable than now, after years of gout had made his temper testy and his speech somewhat crisp.

But oh! what terror fell on Helen when the young Laird and the sheriff came down to their cot with this message. At first she declared that John was not at home and had been gone near a week; and, when the sheriff said that he had seen him within that time, she protested that she had said this because John was sick in bed and could not see anyone; and she stood like a tigress barring the way, and ready to tear the eyes out of anyone who offered to lay hands on her John.

The young Laird urged Helen to let them see John, merely to speak with him, pledging his honor that no trick should be played upon her. Finally she compromised by letting the Laird into John's room; but barred the way against the sheriff. Muir found John lying on the bed, a trifle pale and with his arm bound up.

The Laird's face grew grave at sight of this. "Why, John," he said, "what ails ye, man? Helen says ye arena quite well?"

"Na, my Laird, I amna rightly mysel'," replied John.

"But what ails ye?" persisted James.

"I hae met wi' an accident. I fell frae a wagon," said John, truthfully enough; for he had gone down like a shot, under the sudden blow.

"But this isna a canny matter, John. The magistrates will inquire o' ye regardin' the fracas in which the gypsy lads were set free; and ye will gae before them a wounded man, and they will hae a right to ken how ye cam' by your fa'."

"I just let go whan I should hae held on, and so I fell to the ground; that is a'," answered John.

"That will do for you and me, John, wha ken ane anither; but it winna satisfy the magistrates," said Muir, sorely troubled and perplexed.

Leaving John, he went out to the sheriff, and bid him return to Middenmuir and tell the magistrates that the Laird of Stoneywold sends to their Worships his respectful greeting, and that his steward, John Gunn, is sick and not fit for any journey nor to undergo an examination; and that he will become surety for the bringing of John Gunn before their Worships, at any time they may appoint; and, in the meantime, he promised the sheriff to await the answer at John's cottage.

To this the sheriff agreed and took his departure, to Helen's great relief, and the Laird paced up and down before the cottage, sorely puzzled what to make of it. Hitherto John's dealings with the gypsies had been, by tacit consent, a kind of restraining supervision used by him to adjust grievous wrongs; but now

it had taken a different complexion when he was involved with those who had undertaken to set aside the decision of the bench of magistrates *vi et armis*.

This was compromising to himself also, for he was known as an active Jacobite, which was perhaps enough for one pair of shoulders to carry, without having to share the odium of countenancing and protecting Egyptians.

The sheriff returned, before long, with the message that it was the pleasure of the magistrates that the Laird of Stoneywold should secure the appearance of John Gunn before their Worships, an hour before noon on Monday; this being Saturday, there were nearly two days in which to devise some way out of the awkward position; for the Laird had no more notion of letting the law deprive him of his steward than John had of letting his companions go to the gallows; but the Laird did not propose so summary a process as John had chosen.

Muir was without counselors, for his father would do nothing but rave at the tyranny of the Saxon courts, and his mother was out of sympathy with him, and suspected John and Helen of abetting James in his love affair.

Helen counseled resistance or flight, and could not understand why the Laird felt any obligation to redeem his word and bring John to court. In her gypsy creed, honor ceased to bind as between a man and an officer of the law.

James doubted how much it was wise for him to know before he went to court with John; and when he had come to his wit's end, determined to go in and

let John say what he chose. He went in and told John what he had done; Helen sitting by, and thanking him with her eyes. When he had ended, John, frank and open as he always was with those whom he trusted, and loyally feeling that his Laird and chief should know the whole truth, made a clean breast of it.

He told him how he had come among the gypsies, and, turning to Helen, said: "I wad owe them a' that I could gie, were it life itsel', for the bonnie wife that I won frae the tribe;" and Helen's eyes glowed, for to love and be loved was the whole of this woman's life. "And, my Laird," said John, raising himself on his elbow, "I may be far wrang; but, that a man should be hangit for stealin' a beast isna right to my way o' thinkin'; and, as lang as I hae voice or hand to raise agen it, I winna thole to see the thing done. And, for a' their clavers anent witches, I ken there is nae sic a thing, save where the silly women, or far mair silly men, are ready to think them witches wha hae nae mair power to wark their ain will than hae you or I, my Laird. I led the band that set the puir lads and their women free. I am frank to say it to ye, my Laird, and to the court, too, if need be. It was a fair fight; they were armed and sae were we; they were free to shoot, and they did it, and killed their man and brak' my arm for me, and they went scot free wi' a few bruises; and, to my thinkin', they maun be weel content and let the matter bide as it is."

This was well plead, according to John's code, but would hardly answer to bring the magistrates to reason.

The Laird therefore bade John keep a close mouth and leave his case to him, and, as the Sabbath would intervene, he could counsel with Gordon McDonald, and John would have a chance for an unusual "crack" with old Sandy Brown.

The calm of the day of rest came on the heels of this turbulent week, and along with it came old Sandy, as sure as the afternoon sun, and as warm. John made up his mind that he would lay the whole matter before the old Covenanter, whom he relied on with a perfect trust that cast out fear; and John knew that he would get an honest, thorough-going opinion from his friend, and withal one rooted in kindness.

When the evening meal was ended and the Sabbath devotions concluded to Sandy's satisfaction, and little Nell was tucked away in bed, John told his friend of all that he owed to the gypsies, and how he had tried to pay the debt by delivering those condemned, for a slight offense, to an undue penalty.

"It isna a sma' offense to break the law o' God, which says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' " said old Sandy.

"Aye, but doesna God's law, as ye ca' it, say also, 'Thou shalt not kill'?" replied John.

"Aye," answered Sandy, "but that doesna forbid the magistrate, wha beareth the sword frae God, takin' a man's life at the biddin' o' God."

"But has God bid the magistrate tak' the life o' a man for stealin' a horse, or a woman because she was born an Egyptian?" said John.

This brought Sandy to matters beyond his reach. He knew that a man must follow his Bible as the word of God; that it enjoined obedience to the powers that

be as ordained of God; but when the edicts of the powers did not find their sanction in the Bible, then what was to be done he was at a loss to say. His usual refuge was, "Just spier o' the minister anent that and he will set ye right."

When John insisted on his giving him some kind of counsel, he refused: "I canna advise ye, man. May the Lord guide ye. I ken that open confession is guid for the speerit, and, gin ye hae done wrang to ony man, that ye ask his forgiveness; and what is guid as between man and man, maun also profit between a man and those set to rule owre him. But I hae sma' experience in sic matters, and wadna bring ye to harm. Ye hae meddled in matters too lairge for ye and are in a sore strait, and hae need o' better guidance than an untutored webster can gie ye. I will mak' it a subject o' prayer, the nicht, and hae nae doot this will serve ye better than my puir counsel."

Of this John had his doubts, but Helen was greatly comforted, feeling that Sandy's prayers were very potent in influencing the fate of his friends.

The old weaver's matter-of-fact way of speaking of the power of prayer had so impressed Helen that, from her point of view, she shared his living faith; but John wanted counsel that would avail before the powers seen and temporal, rather than appeals to the unseen and eternal.

While John and Sandy were having their "crack" in the cottage, the young Laird and Gordon McDonald were closeted together at the Hall. The minister entered heartily into the matter, partly from his inter-

est in the gypsies as a class, and more from a personal interest in John's history; for he himself was a Highland man, born and bred among the hills and heather, and could appreciate, if he could not approve of, John's conduct.

"We must judge the man," he said, "not by the rules we lay down for ourselves. His resistance to the constables doesna mean what it would had you and I been at it. To him they do not represent law and order, but a force organized to maintain an authority. He defended them from a sentence which he regarded as gross injustice. There lingers among our Highland people a trace of this spirit which inclines to appeal to this same court of last resort. I believe John Gunn to be a good and true man, and you have no cause to lose your trust in him. But the man should be made to see that this law of the sword is lawlessness."

"I am glad to hear ye say so, Mr. McDonald," said James, relieved that the minister took this view of his trusty steward. "But my chief concern now is how to obtain such a generous view of the matter by the magistrates."

"Aye, that is more troublesome, but we will look into the question. Has John anything to suggest?"

"He has no other idea," said James, "than, that having done his duty by those who needed his help, no harm can befall him if strict justice be done. He quarrels with the penalty for horse-stealing, and feels that he did a righteous thing to save the lives of men who were to be hung for this, and of women whose chief crime was being Egyptians."

"Aweel," answered the minister warmly, "I canna

say John is far wrang. I wadna deem it prudent to say it to him; but, do ye ken, man, I think he was sair richt in his principles, though he went aboot practicin' them after a rough fashion; but, upon my word, had I been there, I fear I wad hae taen a hand to let the puir feckless creatures loose. But we winna advance these opinions, as they may not be for the public weal; but we hae a richt to our ideas on sic matters."

"But on what can we rest our defense of John before the magistrates?" queried Muir, reverting to the pressing question.

Then the minister, after conning over it for a while, proposed this plan: they should all go together to court, he and the Laird and John Gunn; against the vague testimony, which would probably be conflicting also, and which did not identify John as one of the assailants, they should set John's high character and standing for years in the community.

If his association with the gypsies was advanced against him, they would offset this by the fact that his wife was a gypsy, and that his influence had always been restraining, often causing restitution to be made, as many would gladly testify.

As to his being the sole recipient of the news of the time of their departure, the same man had told Mr. McDonald, and very likely others also. There was no evidence that the rescuers were gypsies; they might have been Charlie's friends the innkeepers or farmer lads; for, as far as common rumor went, the band had left the shire some days before.

For the rest, as there was naught proven, nor

indeed definitely charged against him, let the Laird and the minister give bond that he would keep the peace and appear, at any time, upon summons of the court, to answer any charge laid against him. This seemed plain enough; but the magistrates might ask awkward questions; but for an answer to these they must trust to the spur of the moment.

The next morning James rode down to fetch John to court, and along with him went the minister, his broad face blithe and strong, putting heart and courage into the party. James dreaded to see John with his bandaged arm, but, when he came out, there was no sign of a bandage, his arm hanging down straight and fair within his sleeve; and Helen laughed when she saw the Laird's look of surprise.

This was her contribution to the cause; she had spent the night fashioning splints so thin and elastic that they scarcely thickened the arm, and wrapped them securely and evenly with strips of soft silk; and when she slipped on his coat, apart from a somewhat awkward carriage of the arm, there was no sign of anything amiss. Her instinct and skill lay in the direction of secrecy, like hunted animals who hide their tracks, or cover their trail by taking to the burn.

John was mightily heartened when he saw the minister, and thanked Mr. McDonald with undoubted sincerity.

"Ye hae been at a verra bad business, John, my man," said McDonald. "It is the duty o' a guid citizen to abide by the laws and keep his hand frae rebellion agen his rulers. We are here to do what we can for ye, but ye are in a bad fix, my friend, and

I trust this will prove a lesson to ye not to meddle wi' the action o' the magistrates."

"I ken a' that is true, Mr. McDonald," said John quietly; "but I couldna see the lads hang for the shiftin' o' a few ponies, and the women drowned for nae ither crime than my ain wife is guilty of."

"Na, na, John, I ken that; but the lads arena right to meddle wi' ither folks' gear; and the women are far different frae your bonnie Helen," replied the minister; and John thanked him for seeing his wife as he saw her, a true, sweet woman.

When they came to the courtroom it was crowded, and among the people, high and low, was a host of John's friends, ready to speak for him, if need be. He passed through the crowd with a firm step and confronted the judges, with the Laird of Stoneywold and Rev. Gordon McDonald by his side, and, in the rear of the room, the dark eyes of Helen looking fiercely out from the sea of faces.

John stood tall and erect before his judges, and his eye met theirs with the steadiness of one conscious of right, and ready to answer to any for his conduct.

"Ye are summoned, John Gunn," said the old judge, frowning over his spectacles, "to give answer anent the assault on His Majesty's constables and the rescue of certain prisoners condemned to death;" the judge paused, and John stood waiting.

"What have ye to say, John Gunn?" said the judge sternly.

"What is the chairge agen me, my Laird?" said John quietly.

"The chairge—the chairge?" stammered the judge.

"Aye, my Laird," said the imperturbable John.

"Ye have heard the chairge, that o' freein' prisoners frae the hands o' the constables," thundered the judge.

"I didna hear the chairge, my Laird," said John. "But wha chairges me wi' that, my Laird, and is there ony proof?"

"Ye are well known to be the only man aware of the day and hour when the prisoners were to leave the toll-booth for Aberdeen; and that is both chairge and proof enough to require you to clear your skirts of this matter, if ye can," replied the judge, beginning to see his way to assail this imperturbable man.

Then the Laird of Stoneywold spoke:

"My Lord, this Worshipful Court has fallen on some suspicion which is not well founded. My friend, the Rev. Gordon McDonald, is open to the same accusation, on the same grounds, as this which is brought against my valued steward and trusty friend of my father and myself; for he had these same facts some twelve hours sooner than my steward, and from the same man. If his memory did not serve him to let you know of his telling it to Mr. McDonald, it may have slipped his mind how many others beside shared the secret. It would not become this honorable court to let the babbling of so loose a tongue cast a slur upon the character of a man who has lived so long and run such an honorable career in this community. And now to show your Worships how earnestly I feel it to be my duty to protect one who has done me and my father such faithful and honorable service, and also to testify my desire to honor the law as administered

by your Worships, I am ready to give bonds for John Gunn that he shall keep the peace of the realm, and shall appear before this Worshipful Court at any time to answer any charge that may be brought against him; and to this bond my friend, the Rev. Gordon McDonald will set his hand and seal, if it be so required."

A murmur of applause ran through the room, and, if Stoneywold could have seen Helen's eyes resting on him as he spoke thus of her John, he would have guessed, what in after years he knew right well, that he had won her unchangeable devotion.

The keen old judge saw the situation at a glance; the one strong point rested on the testimony of an idle babbler, and even if the witness were trustworthy it would go but a short way toward connecting John with the affair; and so, seeing the drift of public opinion, and deeming it best to recognize this quickly and gracefully, he said: "John Gunn, ye are honorably discharged; and this court congratulates ye on having won such friends to stand by ye in an hour of need."

This was greeted with loud applause, and after a feast at the inn where the Laird treated John and his friends to some stout-brewed ale, they rode off homeward amid the cheers of the crowd.

On their way home John thanked the Laird, in a homely, hearty way.

"Ye hae done me and Helen a service, my Laird, that we canna forget; and sae lang as there rins a drap o' blude in our veins it is yours."

Muir was touched by the tone of deep affection.

"I hae done mysel' a service, John; for ye are well worth savin'. But ye hae had a narrow escape, and ye maun think on Helen and the lassie, e'er ye mix yoursel' in ony sic matter again. Bide fast by the counsel o' those wha ken and esteem ye, and cut loose frae the Lochgellie band. Ye hae paid your debt to them; and it cam' near costin' ye mair than it ever cost them to serve you."

John made up his mind to profit by this counsel. The Lochgellies were back from the south before long, and Charlie Graham's escape made him bolder than ever, and though John had them by the nape of the neck, yet their hold on him was very uncomfortable, and they were exacting, and a constant menace to his peace, who had more at stake than they; their quasi recognition of him in public places haunted him like a ghost that he was fain to lay at rest.

One day the chance came for him to get rid of this rubbish of the past. Young Ruthven of Ballingarry was dining with Stoneywold on his way from the south, where he had been recruiting men for his Dutch Brigade. He asked the Laird whether this shire could not furnish him the needed contingent.

"There are men enow here wha eke out but a scant livin'," said Muir, "but whether they will care to tak' service in foreign ditches, I amna so sure."

"How can I get at some o' them and gie them the choice?" said the captain.

"Aweel," answered Muir, "we will call John Gunn; gin he canna help ye, the deil kens wha can."

When John heard what was wanted, he saw, in this, his opportunity; and his eyes twinkled as he thought

of Charlie and his lads at sea, and among the Dutchmen.

"And when will ye be ready for them, Captain Ruthven?" he said.

"Straight away," replied Ruthven.

"Aweel, Ballingarry," said John, "do ye tak' your road at aince for Aberdeen, and tak' oot a passage for the twal ye hae ca'd for, and ten mair to boot, and send word whan your ship sails; and, gin ye say naught o' it to ony, your braw soldiers will be ready for ye, at the day and hour."

On the appointed day John appeared with twenty-two swarthy men; but when they found what lay between them and the promised gold, they had no stomach for the adventure. By a judicious combination of threats and promises, and a liberal crossing of their palms with silver, and the assurance that their families should follow them, John managed to get them on board, and so rid himself of the shadows of his past life.

It was a strong testimony to the honor that prevails among these ruder types of men, and the power of their unwritten code, that these men went, never doubting that John would be as good as his word, and, in due time, would send them their women and children. And apart from other motives which kept the obligation in John's heart, his word was a bond which he would face death rather than forfeit.

CHAPTER X.

“YE LIVE ON LOVE, AS LAVEROCKS DO ON LEEKS.”

THE result of James's wooing had been to make them all feel that Janet had better go back to Ross, and as her longer stay did not conduce to her own peace of mind, nor to the comfort of any of the family at Stoneywold, she started on the next day for home, accompanied by John Gunn and the two Helens, whose hearts were all alive to the woes of James and Janet.

The parting with Mrs. Muir and Margaret was such as made Janet feel that this was her last visit to Castlewood Hall. There was no sign of relenting, no kindly word or look, but only formal messages of courtesy to her mother and a courtly leave-taking to herself.

James, without taking counsel of any, saddled his horse and rode away with Janet, to his mother's dismay; for perhaps he had made his choice between house and lands and his lady love, and had forsaken all to follow her.

This would have sadly disconcerted Mrs. Muir, for, after all said and done, James, with his masterful ways, was her favorite son.

John and Helen gave the lovers ample opportunity to take sweet counsel together, and James rode all day

long beside her, using the time to let Janet see the depth and fervor of his manly love; and this was a store on which her heart fed in bitter days to come, when, sundered by more than time or space, she had need of something to keep her faith and patience from failing.

When they halted for the night at the Leslie Arms, in the little village of Strathmuir, James bid her good-by, with mutual promises to write every month as long as their exile lasted; and, with the vows which love always offers to love, they separated, little dreaming how deep a chasm would yawn between them.

James rode home in the gloaming, and through the deepening night, not like a disconsolate lover; but buoyant in the assurance that circumstances would bend to his will, and his mother's opposition would cease when he let her see that, for him, it was Janet or no one.

Janet lay down to weep, overmastered by the feeling that the parting with her lover was final, that nothing could win the consent of his stern mother, without which she could never be his bride.

It was fitting that the burden should be thus divided, for James had none to speak him fair and bid him hope for better days; while Janet had Helen, who came and soothed her and bid her hope, telling her tales of Jamie's boyhood, how he was so strong, brave, and trusty that they all leaned on him; and soon he would be the Laird and master of his fortune.

When they reached Braemar, Helen had old Elspeth trace the lines of Janet's fortune, and they were so clear and correct regarding the past, that Janet could

not but give a listening ear to the fair future predicted for her by the old spaewife; but all these consolations could not wholly still her sad forebodings.

James set himself to work at once in regard to a settlement of the estate; but met strenuous opposition from his mother, who now felt that her eldest son should not be set wholly free from her control. But James pushed the matter until the old Laird was driven to yield, agreeing to settle the estate on his son, subject to an annuity to the father during his life, and, after his death, two-thirds of the amount to his mother and sister; while Thomas was to receive a sum paid down.

The old Laird was fairly worn out with this discussion; for he was under a cross fire all the while, Margaret taking active sides with her mother, and Thomas slyly inflaming his mother and sister with such stories as he could gather, or invent, of disaffection among the tenantry.

One result of all this toil and trouble was the thorough alienation of James from his mother and sister, who were so arrayed against his every interest that there was no tie between them save duty; and this without love is but an iron chain.

Thomas, in the meanwhile, was gone to Ardross "to bid them good-by against his next long voyage," he said; but in truth to make another effort to win Janet, with the field all to himself; gauging Janet's constancy by his own truth; and meanly estimating that until James came into his title their chances were equal.

At first he was encouraged by Janet's readiness to

sit and talk with him of Stoneywold, and by her silence with regard to James. But he was angered at her watchfulness for the mail-carrier; and, when the bulky letter with James's bold superscription came, she fled with it to her room, and there was no ride or walk for him that day.

In order to break down this barrier, he took care, on post days, to meet the carrier on the highroad and on the way back destroy these hateful missives. He watched Janet's weary look of disappointment as the weeks passed into months and no letter came from James.

At first this made no difference in the missives that went back, which Thomas had proposed to destroy, but afterward thought better of it, deeming that their reproaches would exasperate James and turn his heart from Janet, making him amenable to his mother's counsel.

The weary look of waiting in Janet's eyes he took for a sign of the waning of her love for James. His next assurance of success came when Janet wrote at longer intervals, and then ceased sending the letters which brought no reply.

To a casual question from Lady McKenzie, when Thomas gave her his mother's message of remembrance, his ready answer was: "They are all well but in a great bustle; for James will celebrate his comin' to the estate and his betrothal wi' Annie Elsmere at the same time. I hae a letter frae Jamie, Janet, in which he sends his kind remembrance and says that baith he and Annie will write to ye. Annie will hae ye to Kenmuir for auld acquaintance sake wi' Jamie

and hersel', " and he watched her grow pale, sure that he had given the death blow to her love. This was his hour, when, disgusted with James's treachery and smarting under his desertion, she would be ready to show that she too could forget, and could come to visit Annie with a lover of her own. So he chose this evening to urge his faithful devotion in contrast with his light-o'-love brother.

She was sitting alone, in front of the house, looking out over the glen, where, like a placid lake, the mist lay white and still in the moonlight, and a dull misery lay upon her heart, clouding the future, as the glen was shrouded.

Then came the memory of the past, of which nothing could rob her; his vows of love, the ringing passion of his voice, the brightness of his smile, the depth of tenderness in his eye, as he dwelt fondly on his love for her from early boyhood; and she shook off the dreary present, and determined to live in the past, and wait for the future. Then it crossed her thought that she might brave the lonely ride to Braemar and call upon old Elspeth to solve the riddle; at that moment she heard Thomas's step, and he came and sat down beside her.

"Janet," he began, "I was sorry to be the bearer o' ill tidin's to ye; but ye ken that absence aft mak's a man forget; and Jamie, puir lad, was ever that way, hot for havin' what lay near to hand, and he wad soon forget whan the toy was taen out o' his sight. Wi' me it was itherwise; whan my heart was set on onything, I held fast by it till it was mine; wad do well-nigh onything to compass my desire."

"Aye," broke in Janet sharply, "I believe ye, Thomas."

Encouraged by this, Thomas plunged on, "I was sure, Janet, whan ye cam' to ken us, ye wad find us oot. And noo I am ready to tell ye why I hae lingered sae lang in Ross. I kenned how it wad gae wi' Jamie, and that for me there could be no change; and now that Jamie has his blue-eyed Annie, I will claim my brown-eyed Janet. Ye are mine by right o' a love that canna change, and as mine I wad hae ye gae to visit Annie and her fause James." With this crowning effort, he closed his appeal or, rather, assertion of his right, by reaching out to embrace her.

She rose to her feet, and stood tall and erect before him, outlined against the mist, like a wraith; and, while he cowered before her, answered him, without a tremor in her voice, "Ye are fause-hearted, Thomas Muir, to the very core; so fause that ye canna ken that anither may be true. Ye ken my bindin' to Jamie, and, gin he were fause to it, I wad be true till death. But Jamie is true; his verra body bears the mark o' truth, the ring o' his voice, the tread o' his foot, the glint o' his e'en. But ye hae a slippery voice, and a lyin' e'e, and a crafty step. So I tell ye noo, aince for a', Thomas Muir, while Jamie lives I will wed nane ither; and, gin Jamie were deid, I wad rather live on the memory o' what he was, than wi' sic a fause carle as thou," and she swept past him into the house and up to her room, to spend the night in tears, and wait for the morning, as watchers do; and, when the day broke, to wish that it were night again and time for rest.

As time wore on she faded, as the roses wither in the summer's heat, finding that, like some other things, "waiting" was easier to preach than to practice.

But at least one relief was granted her; Thomas left on the next day; even he, at last, was penetrated with the belief that his wooing was helpless, and did not care to await the disclosure of his peculiar methods of winning a bride, which would surely overtake him soon.

In the meantime, James, made desperate by the cessation of Janet's letters, urged on the settlements which would enable him to woo her openly, insisting that his father should give him a letter to Lady McKenzie giving his formal consent to the marriage.

Here was a tug of war, Mrs. Muir declaring that she would not live under the same roof with Janet; James as stoutly maintaining that he would not live without her. The poor old Laird could let neither go, nor could he persuade either to yield an inch. At last he effected a compromise which would still the noise of battle and let him pass quietly away to the only rest he could hope for; he gave James the letter which he demanded, exacting from him a promise not to let his mother know of it, nor use it until after his death.

This put but a short restriction on its use, for, within a month, he passed suddenly away, and James, without further parley, told his mother of the letter, and informed her that he was going with it to Ross to ask Lady McKenzie's consent to his marriage with Janet.

"Ye ken what that means for me and Margaret,"

said Mrs. Muir, in a hard voice. "But I reckon that, in these days, the fair face o' a lass wins mair hearts than a mither's love."

"I ken this, mither," answered James, without bitterness, for his mood was generous now, "that, gin Janet will be my wife, I hae won a bonnie lass wha will be a fond daughter, gin ye welcome her as such."

Mrs. Muir's lip curled with scorn: "I ken weel enow what kind o' a daughter she wad be, wha has turned awa' the heart o' a son frae his mither;" and, having the last word, she swept from the room.

The next day James was off to Ross.

The summer had waned, and the fresh autumn days, with their cool evenings, were fine weather for hard riding. John Gunn rode with him the first day, ostensibly to take his instructions as to things to be done in his absence or made ready against his return, but really to watch this romance which he and Helen had followed with such keen interest, and bring her back news how James bore himself under the near fulfillment of his hopes.

Up and along the Don side they rode, now and again crossing the stream; and ever the rushing waters sang to the hasty lover, as they leapt down to the embrace of the sea, and they made him long to leap up to the hills, where a boundless love was awaiting him; but it is slow work up hill.

John rode about twenty miles with him, and, after some futile effort to talk of things useful, drifted perforce to the only topic that would hold the young Laird's attention—Janet, and the way to her, its distances, delays, and their home-coming.

So bidding him Godspeed, John turned back and reported to Helen that the Laird was "clean daft; as we all are, bonnie wife, whan ye beguile us wi' your saft black e'en."

"But, John," said Helen, "the Leddy Janet's e'en arena black, nor unco saft."

"Aweel," answered John, "it matters little the color—black, brown, or blue; it is a' ane to the spell-bound, wha can rarely tell the color o' his mistress's e'en; and the Leddy Janet gars them look saft on the Laird, howe'er they look on you."

"But, John, ye haena told me a bit what the Laird had to say," said Helen, eager for the details, which reminded her of a time in her life which she would not willingly forget.

"My bonnie lassie," said John fondly, "ye ken the story weel; it is aye the same in hall or hovel, save only anither name. Wi' me it was Helen that I heard the birds sing and the burns wimple; wi' the Laird, it was just Janet that they dinged in his ears, owre and owre again. And, faith, he seemed to catch the tune, for it was Janet wi' himsel', every three or four words. And, had I askit him wha should I let the nether farm to, he wad hae answered Janet; and what should we ca' the gray filly it wad hae been Janet; and wi' the same stuff he wad fence a field or big a cot. There was but ane thing in the lad's head, and sae there was naught else to be gotten frae him."

Helen threw herself into John's arms, with her eyes aglow, "Aye, John; but it is bonnie."

"Aye, and halesome too," said John, as he kissed

her; for she was dearer now than when he wooed her under the hawthorn hedges.

After John left him, James pricked up his horse and rode harder, as the rushing waters goaded him on. The stream was swollen by recent rains, and the day was waning as he rode down toward the ford of Tillyfourie, when a group of Highlanders at work in a field near the road came running toward him, shouting and waving their hands. They were like men possessed, and he drew rein; and when they reached him, one stood at his bridle, and all united in protesting against his crossing the stream.

"I am on an errand that will not bear delay, and I must stop at Glenkindie Inn this nicht," said James, endeavoring to shake loose his horse's bridle.

"Ye maun bide here or ye winna sleep at Glenkindie," said one of the men, while another, in a matter-of-fact way, asked: "What do ye say, lads, shall we lift him frae the garron, and bind him, till the morn?"

They spoke in simple earnest, and James was making ready to force his way, when he bethought him that fair words are better than foul blows, and asked: "What for wad ye bind me? Gin it be for friendship ye can do it by words; but, gin ye are foes, I hae ne'er been bound, and ye canna bind me alive."

"Do ye hear the feckless laddie?" said the chief spokesman, whom they called Angus, a grizzled old Highlander whose brawny arms, thrown around James, would have settled the question at once. "Ye canna crass the ford and live, and ye maunna gae frae our hands to your death."

James's patience was exhausted, when old Angus

added, "Ye are too fine a lad to meet foul play, and we winna stand by and see it dune."

"But tell me why I canna gae forth on my errand. I hae crassed Don water three times to-day," said James, putting strong restraint on himself.

Then Angus spoke out freely: "We were haein' our cracks, at noon this day, anent the Don water that was brawlin' down the glen. I was tellin' the laddies o' the fause ford aboon my faither's cot on the Black Water, and hoo, aince in ilka year, be it spring or be it fa', but always wi'out fail whan the water gang brawlin', we were ware o' the kelpie wha had but ane cry: 'The hour but not the man is come'; and, watch as we might, there wad come some traveler to the ford, and him the kelpie wad claim for her ain."

His companions listened, awestruck, to their oracle, but James, growing restive, broke in upon the tedious recital of the garrulous old man: "What has all this to do wi' me? The Black Water is far frae here and I am——"

"Haud fast your tongue and your lugs open, my laddie, and ye'll win to be wiser than ye are noo," replied the stolid old man; and James saw that he must fight it out or hear it through, and chose the latter.

Angus gravely resumed, "We were haein' our crack anent these wonderfu' things, and I was tellin' o' the bonnie lads and lassies wham the kelpie had buried in the Black Water, and hoo the Don was roarin' uncannily; and, just e'er ye cam' in sight owre the crest o' the hill, I was ware o' the kelpie's cry; and I said 'We maun look out for the man'; and here ye are.

Noo ye ken why ye canna crass the ford the nicht."

"But, my friend, I am in nae fear o' kelpies, and will e'en keep on my way, with thanks for your warning. Unhand my bridle, good friend, and I'll wish you farewell," said James firmly, and with as much patience as was left to him.

"Ye'll do naething o' the kind," said Angus, and, suiting the action to the word, he threw his arms around James and lifted him from his horse.

The old man's grip was like iron, and he quietly gave orders to bind James hand and foot, while he held him, and one of them took his horse's head to lead him up the hill. Here was a sorry plight for an impatient lover.

"Hold one moment, and listen to me, friend Angus," said James, feeling like a child that does not know whether to laugh or cry. "Hae ye ne'er heard that twa things gar a man free frae the kelpie's power, a mither's love and a true sweetheart?"

"Aye, laddie," said Angus, "but where is the mither or the sweetheart?"

"I am ridin' hard to meet my sweetheart, wha waits for me in the Highlands, and her heart is like to rend, gin I fail to come, and I hae eighty more miles to ride. Gin I crass the ford wi' her name on my lips there isna a kelpie in a' the Don that can harm me. Ye tell me that ye hae heard the kelpie ca' frae the Don, 'The hour but not the man is come'; the voice o' my sweetheart has been callin' to me frae the Don water that same message; and I maun heed the voice that I hear."

Old Angus listened solemnly. "The laddie is richt; set him up again, laddies, and let him win through; the kelpie canna do him harm."

So they watched him, as one with a charmed life, ride down through the foaming flood and up the other bank, and, as he turned to wave his adieu, shouted over the water: "Fair fa' ye, laddie, and your bonnie Highland lassie!" and old Angus added this to his legends of the kelpies.

As James rode on, the night fell dark, the gray moss and lichen under the trees made a sort of elfin moonlight, the chill wind soughed through the bare birches an ourie song for a lone rider; but against the kelpie, the mirk night, the chill wind, and all boding sights or sound he bore a talisman on which was graven "Janet"; which, as John Gunn said, was "halesome."

The inn marked, in a double sense, the first stage of his journey; for here he had parted from Janet, but little more than a year ago, and her presence haunted the place. In his pocket was the letter which told him all her hopes and fears, as she rested here for the night.

After seeing first to the care of his faithful pony, and then paying due respect to a hearty, hot supper, he went straight to the room where the letter was written, and read it and a budget in the same handwriting, and then, like a sensible young man, instead of wasting his time by going straight to bed, he read them all over a second time, and some of them a third time.

The next day's ride was on up the Don, then through Glen Avon, past old Cairngorm and along

Loch Avon to Spey side, a good forty-five miles. He met the parties of bee-harvesters bringing home the hives that had been all summer on the moors and were now full of the strong, rich mountain honey. He heard their merry voices, as they reckoned up the fruits of the industry of their little servants, and estimated which hive held a comb fit for the Laird, or the parson, or the factor. James, who was after honey too, gave them a friendly greeting, and thought of his home-coming.

During this night's halt he cheered his solitude by another perusal of the letters; which seemed to gain freshness and interest as he drew nearer to the writer.

Early the next morning he crossed the auld brig and rode along the Spey for the head of Loch Ness, and so on to the home of his Janet.

It was more than fifty miles to ride and it was far into the night before he halted at the door and, fumbling about in the dark, by dint of knocking and shouting at last roused the inmates; for young Roderick McKenzie was not wakened until the whole house was roused.

When the young Laird of Ardross recognized the voice of his cousin of Stoneywold, he shouted through the hall to Janet to make ready a room for Jamie Muir.

While Janet lingered, in order that her own ears might assure her that this was not a dream, old Lady McKenzie came into the hall and bid Janet go to bed, and allow her to see to the care of guests, as she had always done. "And when they come at siccan uncanny hours, wi' dinsome racket to rout peacefu'

folk frae their rest, they were more mannerly to bide in the byre, or lie down wi' the hounds before the hearth."

So she sent the household to their beds, calling down through the dark to her son: "'Roderick, ye can bid Jamie Muir bide where he is, or can gie him a share o' your ain bed; but he maun bide still and not disturb the sleep o' quiet folk ony mair!" with which scant courtesy she went back to her room.

Lady McKenzie was not lacking in the Highland grace of hospitality, and James Muir was a favorite of hers; but her heart was sore for her Janet, who had been little else than cast out of Stoneywold, and she suspected the reason. She knew that there had been youthful love passages between Jamie and her girl; she knew, from Lady Stoneywold's own lips, that Margaret Erskine was, at least, second choice for her son.

And this Margaret Erskine, with a dower ten times greater than her Janet's, famed through the shire for her beauty, having traveled and seen the world, easy in her manners, witty and genial, had won the name of "Merry Meg" among her wide circle of friends and kinsfolk. And now she was Janet's guest, and James Muir was come to court her, before Janet's eyes; and the heart of the old lady was sore at the thought of how her girl must be wounded and give no sign. She lay awake planning how to humble this truculent lover, who was fain to buy his own pleasure at the expense of her Janet; and made up her mind that she would set, here and there, a thorn among Master Muir's roses.

Janet went to her room, and she too passed a sleepless night, not planning to set thorns or roses in Jamie's path; but in a tumult as to what the message from his mother might be.

As she communed with her own heart in the night watches, she recalled passages of his letters, needing no candle to read them; for she knew them by heart.

James too passed but an indifferent night, and was up betimes; now seated in front of the fire, warming himself with the recital of what he would say to her and what she would say to him, then starting out into the cold haur of the early morn repeating:

“Oh! I'm wat, wat.
Oh! I'm wat and weary,
Fain wad I rise and rin
Thinkin' o' my dearie.”

But when, through the window of the dining-room, he saw his “dearie” superintending the preparations for breakfast, and started to “rin,” with his hand on the door, he paused—why, he could not tell. How hard he had ridden to meet her, why did he wait on the threshold—his heart thumped, his ears were ringing, and all his fine speeches were forgotten. It does not do to rehearse for such parts; the drama plays itself. At last he “tird the pin” and was in her presence.

“Janet,” he gasped, “I hae come——” then his breath failed him.

“I kenned that ye wad come, Jamie,” she said sweetly, and came to his arms as though their parting had been but over night. “And ye find me true, Jamie; for I wadna forfeit the bonnie token that ye

gied me," and she pointed to the brooch with the true lover's knot. Then, seeing that he was still under the spell of thoughts too strong for speech, she said lightly, "I am owre fond o' bawbies, Jamie; and was bound to keep this, for I wear nane ither," and she laughed softly, as she nestled closer to him.

Then he laughed too, and did ever so much more, as these kind of people have done and will do, and which needs no further description; for those who have done it know all about it; and those who have not, might deem it folly; and these two were not fools.

The story of the intercepted letters was soon guessed, and it was "halesome" for Thomas that he was on the high seas.

Into this scene came Merry Meg, who needed no other explanation than a hug and kiss of great intensity from Janet; while James, if he had been gifted with four legs, would not have had one left to stand on.

"I hae always heard that ye maun rise early, if ye wad hear the laverock's sweetest song, and I was aye fond o' the song o' birds. But I am unco fond o' a guid breakfast; and gin ye think to gar me feast on sic thin fare as I see here, then ye maun find me a lover, wha has ridden a hundred miles and mair, to tell me that I hae bonnie brown eyes and am a' the world to him, and sic like clishmaclaver. Be aff wi' ye, Janet, and see to the breakfast, while I court your Jamie, a bit, in the window-seat, and gar him see how a girl wha isna love-daft can handle a bonnie lad. Come, Jamie;" and she drew him to the window-seat

and plunged *con amore* into the whole matter, not only into the past with its shadows, but into the sunny future on to the wedding, when, where, and how it was to be. And, better than all, she undertook to manage the announcement to Lady McKenzie. Jamie was like wax in the hands of this bold leader, to whom obstacles were only cobwebs.

So, while Janet kept flitting in and out of the room making ready the morning meal, Meg was preparing for her a morsel sweeter than the mountain honey and stronger than the "bread that perisheth."

When Lady McKenzie came down she found Janet doing her duty, like a diligent little housewife, James and Miss Erskine sitting apart in the window-seat, talking earnestly in an undertone.

The old lady, using the kinsman's right to chide, welcomed James with: "Ye hae a braw tap for a mid-night hour, Jamie Muir. I trust ye left your leddy mither more comfortable than ye found me, nigh frightened into an ague by your night alarm."

"I left my mither very well, and present her compliments to your Leddyship, and am sorry that I disturbed ye; but I was weary, frae a sair lang ride, for I hae ridden fast and hard, and was fain to find shelter for my pony and mysel'."

"The byre was open to ye baith. But ye maun mak' less haste; ye were aye a bit head owre heels, Jamie," said the old lady; then to Miss Erskine, "Meg, lass, ye are better nearer the fire; the haur is cauld and unwholesome, and ye gie sma' heed to your health."

Meg, with a smile, came forward, and, standing

beside the hearth, with her arm on the mantel shelf, made far too handsome a picture to please the old lady; nor did it add to her charms when she said: "Jamie was tellin' me that which made me forget the haur o' the mornin'."

"Aweel," answered Lady McKenzie, "it isna fendy to gie too quick an ear to a laddie's clavers. Jamie hasna sleepit weel eneuch to hae the fu' power o' his wits;" which brought a peal of laughter from Meg directed at Jamie, while Janet looked like a rosy dawn.

The old lady was sadly nonplussed. She could guess the riddle so far as it touched James and this saucy Meg; but what of Janet?

By Meg's advice, James was to present his credentials before breakfast. "It will be sae bonnie to hae a kind o' weddin' breakfast to celebrate your trystin'; and we will a' eat wi' a fine appetite," she had said.

In accordance with this plan, Meg, who could go very far with Lady McKenzie and not come to grief, broke in at this point: "My Leddy, I hae counseled Jamie to tell you our bit o' news before breakfast; it will gar us eat in merry mood. He has a letter for you frae his faither."

"Meg, lass, haud thy folly and mak' nae sic uncanny jokes owre the puir Laird, wha is past haudin' commerce wi' us," said Lady McKenzie sternly.

"It isna a joke, my Leddy," said James, producing the letter and, in his confusion, the budget of Janet's letters too.

"Hand them a' owre, Jamie," laughed Meg. "They'll be bonnie readin' and will refresh Leddy McKenzie's memory."

James fumbled with the letters, Janet stood waiting in a sort of sweet misery, Lady McKenzie frowned sternly, while Meg rang out peal after peal of laughter. At last James found and handed over the letter, explaining as well as he could that, in accordance with his father's request, he had come to ask Janet's hand, which he had been kept from doing sooner by his father's death and the settlement of his affairs.

Lady McKenzie felt as though she were being asked to accept the statement that black was white; but did not propose that anyone should see how she felt. After reading the letter very slowly, amid the silence of all the rest, she turned to Janet: "And do ye lo'e him, lassie?"

"Aye, mith'er, as my life," said Janet, looking not at her mother but at James.

"Then he can tak' ye," said the old lady, with a tremulous voice.

"I will be true to her, my Leddy, as I hae been syne I was a boy," said Jamie.

"I ken that, my laddie, or I wadna let her gae wi' ye; and may the blessin' o' our faithers' God bide wi' ye baith; Roderick, say grace, and we will to breakfast. Janet, sit ye by Jamie and ye can eat your first parritch thegither, out o' the same bowl, gin ye wad relish it."

"And I'll salt it for guid luck," said Meg, and she kissed Janet over and over again, and all went merrily, as it should when parted lovers are brought side by side for life.

They were married, on James's birthday, in the kirk of Ardross, with Meg as bridesmaid, and Roderick

McKenzie gave away the bride. John Gunn and Helen rode all the way to Ross to see the closing chapter of this story, which they knew from the very beginning.

Lady Stoneywold and her daughter sent not even one word of greeting to her son and his bonnie bride, hearing with great disgust that Margaret Erskine had been bridesmaid where she should have been bride; which showed that the plans of women, like those of "mice and men," may "gang alee."

They lingered but a little while in Ross, and started on the long ride homeward, with John and Helen as attendants, as blithe a party as ever traveled that road. Janet said that it was worth all it cost to win such joy as this.

The waning sun seemed to lap the earth in golden beauty; the parting song of birds and the hum of insects sounded cheery; and even the mist, as it crept cold and chill from glen and burn, reminded them how cosy the wayside inn would be, with its crackling fire and hot supper.

When they reached Stoneywold, Mrs. Muir met them with glunch and gloom, which James was fain to bear as well as he could; but he set Janet, without more ado, at the head of his house, and in a masterful way bade his sister remember that she was mistress of Stoneywold; and this in his mother's presence. Such a state of things could not long endure, and soon, to the great relief of all parties, Mrs. Muir and Margaret went to live in Aberdeen.

Janet won her way to all hearts, by her strong sense and unchanging truth and goodness. "She is

bonnie and fendy, and as leal as she is fair," was John Gunn's summary of her; and let it stand in lieu of any other. She was thoroughly alive to all that concerned the estate and the welfare of the tenants. "She has mony a crack wi' the Laird, when I am main glad that it is not me she has taen up," said John in telling Helen of the ways of the new Leddy.

Nor need old Lady Stoneywold have looked any farther for a wife for James who could take a position in the shire, worthy of the mistress of Stoneywold.

She became warmly attached to Helen and, through her, deeply interested in the strange race from which she was sprung. They were drawn still closer by their common interest in a gypsy girl whom John had brought from the camp, for Helen to nurse. The poor girl was in the last stage of consumption, past all help save the soothing of her little remnant of life, to which Janet contributed, not only with delicacies made by her own hands, but even more by her daily visits to the cot.

As she strove to speak comforting words to the girl, she found that the troubled spirit was wrestling, alone, with the great problem of the hereafter; and death was casting a shadow darker than the pain and weariness of disease.

At last Janet persuaded her to see the minister, and came, the next afternoon, bringing Gordon McDonald.

It gave one help to look into his broad face, over which the light of humor or depth of tenderness would sweep like sunlight over the water, while his kindling eye imparted his feeling to others.

He drew near the couch on which the dying girl

rested, and, gently laying his strong hand on her thin and wasted fingers, smiled into her eyes; and she smiled back on him, as on an old friend.

"Ye arena weel, lassie; but we a' maun learn, sooner or later, that this is not a' our life. 'Tis a bonnie world," he said, looking out on the bright winter sunshine; "but, by a' accounts, yon world is bonnier far than this, and nae mair sickness is there, nor ony greetin', and death canna win to that city."

The girl listened intently while the rich voice, mellow with sympathy, soothed her by its mere tones, and bore her along as on a broad, flowing current. When he stopped speaking, it was as if a low melody, to which the ear was straining to listen, had suddenly ceased.

"But I dinna ken onything anent the doctrines o' the Kirk," said Elsie Graham pensively. "I ken naething o' prayin' nor what I ought to say; but I am wae o' gangin' to yon warld which is fu' o' wraiths and bogies and ghaists and a' sic like uncanny creatures;" and the girl looked wistfully to the minister to lift the shadows lying athwart her soul. His eyes were fully as sad as hers; for how should he tell the quickly passing soul the truth, in such clear, potent form as would reach her heart and still the passion of its hunger.

"My lassie," he said tenderly, "ye hae naught to do wi' the Kirk or its doctrines. Gin it be God's will to spare ye, we can talk o' that at our leisure; and I wad be fain to win ye to the Kirk and teach ye her sound and precious doctrines. But now we maun look at the matter in anither light and spier how ye

are to find, right now, peace wi' God and sure hope for the life to come."

"Aye," interposed Elsie, "that is what gars me greet; for I am wae to gang into yon gruesome world."

"Yes, lassie, I ken that mony are sair frightened anent the warld ayont this life; but they aftwhiles flichter themselves because they forget that the same guid God wha made this warld a bonnie place for us, where we only bide a wee, winna forget to big us a bonnier house where we are to bide for aye. The Guid Book has naught to say o' wraiths and bogies and siccan creatures; but it tells us that, when we are free frae these puir sickly bodies, we shall be like the angels o' God, which are sae bonnie to look on; and we shall be clad in white, wi' crowns on our heads like kings, and shall greet nae mair. And a' this we win to, wi'out ony price, as the free gift o' God through his Son."

The girl listened, her dark eyes dilating, as the minister culled, from the visions of the Apocalypse, such immortelles as he thought she would prize.

"Aye, minister, that is bonnie; but I dinna ken the Son o' God. Do ye ken Him? Will ye ask it frae Him, for me? Bides He far frae here, at the king's court?" She poured forth these questions with breathless eagerness.

"Nay, my lassie, ye winna find Him at the court o' kings. He is not far frae ony ane o' us."

The girl looked round with a start.

"He isna a wraith or bogie, is he?"

"Na, na, my lassie," said Mr. McDonald, praying

the while that he might say just the right thing. "He is just like the sun in the sky aboon us; and, like the sun shinin' everywhere at the same time, the Son o' God shines wi' His love into our hearts."

"I can see the bonnie sunshine, minister; but I canna feel His love shinin' in my heart. Perhaps, minister, the Son o' God canna love just a puir Egyptian lass. I hae dune nae great ill to ony man, but I ken weel eneuch that I amna fit to bide amang lairds and leddies; and it wad irk me sair to be in their company. And sae, minister, it may be better just to leave me gang where a' the lave o' my folk are in the ither warld, for I doubt that I could be made fit for braw company;" and she fell back wearily upon her pillow and closed her eyes, as though this were the end of the matter.

Then the heart of this man of God was stirred. He did not question that the truth could penetrate the twilight of this soul and make it shine as the perfect day; but he doubted whether there lay in him that power of sympathy making him so akin to her that he could bring the truth home to her heart; and he prayed God to bring him nearer in heart to this gypsy girl. And as he prayed the light broke over him.

Passing his hand gently over the damp forehead he said: "Ye needna answer me, my lassie, but I will tell ye a story o' the Son o' God and a gypsy chief. Lang whiles He had shone on men like the sun in the sky; but they said, as ye said but now, we canna see Him nor feel His love in our hearts. Then He said, I will come down to them and gang aboot wi' them, and they shall look on me and ken that I am wi' them.

So He was just born, like ony ither child, frae the daughter o' a king o' Judah; and He lived like ony ither man, save that He ne'er did wrang; and He healit men's sicknesses. But He cam' to an ill-faured race, wha didna believe on Him, save only a few o' them; so they took Him and nailit Him to a crass, and garred Him hang there to dee. And a' this He bore to win us a hame in yon warld ayont this life. But while He was hangin' on the crass and the cruel nails garred His hands and feet bleed sairly, and the hot fever was burnin' in His body and the sun beatin' down on His head, there hung by His side twa gypsies; ane o' them the chief o' a band wha lived by robbin' and murderin' honest folk, wha had done nae guid but only evil, a' his life lang.

"But when the people, wha had come to see the hangin', stood girnnin' at the Son o' God because He had saved ithers but didna save Himsel', the gypsy chief, turnin' to Him, said "Lord, dinna forget me when ye win to your palace"; and the Son o' God said to him, 'This day shalt thou be wi' me in the bonnie garden o' the Lord.' So ye see, my lassie, the Lord is unco glad to bid the gypsies welcome, gin they are willin' to come."

The soft tears were stealing through the closed eyelids, as she listened.

"Why didna He save Himsel' frae the bitter death?" she asked softly.

"The knowledge o' that, mayhap, ye canna win to, my lassie; but I will tell ye summat mair o' the story. When He died, they took Him frae the crass and buried Him and sealit up the grave, settin' a guard o'

soldiers owre it; but the angels o' God cam' down and brak' the seals and drave awa' the guard, and the Son o' God cam' oot o' the grave alive and showed Himsel' to His friends, and, before their very e'en, rose up into the sky, blessin' them and sayin', 'I am wi' ye to the end o' the warld'. He took this way o' deein' first and risin' frae the deid and ascendin' to heaven, that, wi' His ain bluid, he might wash awa' our sins and gar us see how we should rise frae the deid, and gang to bide wi' Him in heaven. Do ye mind, lassie?"

"Aye, minister," she said, "I mind it weel; the story is unco bonnie, but I canna understand it a', it is sae new and strange."

"He doesna bid us understand it, lassie," said the minister, "for then we couldna win there. The gypsy chief couldna understand it, and we ministers can understand but a wee bit. But ye can believe it, lassie; and it is a bonnie thing just to tak' the Son o' God at His word, and leave a' the lave to Him."

"I will try to believe it, minister. It is a bonnie story, but it gars me greet."

"Aye, lassie, we maun greet owre the sorrows that befell the blessed Saviour; but He is glad owre the joys that He has bought for you; and ye maun try to believe Him, and He will gie ye help to believe mair."

"I will, minister," she said.

Then they bid her good-by, and Janet, leaning over, kissed Elsie fondly, and passed out into the bracing winter air, with her heart too full for words.

When they had gone a little way in silence she turned to her companion with the query.

“What do you think of her, Mr. McDonald?”

“She is a dear lassie,” he answered tenderly.

“And my heart is glad when I think that I led her to say that which won a blessin’ frae the Lord when on earth: ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.’”

It was in such scenes as this that Janet won the blessings of the tenantry. They could depend upon her to grace their weddings, to gladden their christenings, and to stand by the bedside of the dying. To her they brought their troubles for consolation, their perplexities for solution, their little hoards of money for safe-keeping; and the Laird himself was not more felt, as a power on the estate, than was the “canty Leddy o’ Stoneywold.”

CHAPTER XI.

"KINGS AND BEARS AFT WORRY THEIR KEEPERS."

WHILE life at Stoneywold was thus placidly molding itself into another generation, and there had come another James Muir, and a Charles, and an Edward, to wake the long silent echoes which waited in the nooks and corners of the old Hall for children's voices to rouse them, the outside world was stirred with the portent of a coming storm. The air was full of vague rumors, making men feel that something momentous was at hand.

There were gatherings of the gentlemen under cover of a hunt which failed to make the meet, or a hasty summons to the castle of some nobleman; and such a summons took precedence of business or pleasure.

These gatherings were limited to those known to favor the old regime, who spoke of the reigning sovereign as "the Elector"; when they said "the King," they had in mind a gallant youth, with long, golden locks and a courtly air, which won the hearts of men and turned the heads of women, the "bonnie Prince Charlie."

What these gatherings portended, no outsider knew; but that they were not mourners met to bewail the loss of the good old days, was apparent from the buoyant manner of the gentlemen as they gathered or dispersed.

The Laird of Stoneywold was constant in his attendance at these meetings and ardent in his hopes as to their issue. John Gunn insisted on his right, as retainer, to follow the Laird on these expeditions; and an incident of one of their rides convinced James that it was wiser to accept his escort.

He had been summoned to attend a meeting at Lord George Gordon's, in the northern part of the shire. The message had reached him late in the afternoon of a stormy day; they had set out just in the edge of the gloaming, and it was late and very dark when they halted at an inn for supper and to bait their ponies. James was for riding on, though the night was stormy and the way very rough, but John persuaded him that, by waiting till the early morning, they could make better time, with their horses fresh.

After supper John's attention was attracted to three well-dressed gentlemen who were on their way to the stables to look after their horses, an office which most gentlemen of that day left to their gillies; so he quietly followed them; and, as he overheard them talking in low tones, the familiar gypsy cant caught his ear: "Choar a ben gaugie" (Rob the gentleman).

"Shan drom jaw vren beenlightmen" (It is a bad road; he will not go before daylight), said another.

Then followed some whispers, of which John only caught "feck a bar and mar the gaugie" (take a stone and fell the gentleman).

"Chee chee Nawkens; bing feck" (Hold your tongue, tinklers, or the deil will have you), said John,

stepping, out of the darkness, into the circle of light made by the dim lantern.

The startled gypsies drew their ever-ready poniards; but John, with as quick a hand, drew Charlie Graham's snuff-box from his pocket and presented this, in lieu of dirk or pistol.

"Feck fluffan, Nawkens" (Take a pinch of snuff, gypsies), he said; "for ye'll ken me when I tell ye I am John Gunn, gudeman to Helen Faa, of the Lochgellie band."

This put an end at once to hostilities, for the doings of the Lochgellies were among the proudest annals of Little Egypt.

After this the Laird, under John's escort, rode, not only unhindered, but under the protection of these lords of the moors and fens. Janet often insisted that James should use more caution in the matter of his service to the cause, warning him by what she had heard from John of the disastrous ending of the last uprising. It was therefore in a sort of triumph that he came from Lord Gordon's, with great news.

"I hae summat fine to tell ye now, Janet," he said breathlessly. "We hae news o' help frae France."

"But for what will France spend her money and the bluid o' her men to fight our battles? By a' accounts they are busy enough owre the water, wi'out meddlin' wi' us."

"It will aid them abroad to harry the English at hame; and it will gie the seal to the sacred truth that kings hold sway by right divine, and parliaments and ministers hae naught to do wi' makin', but only wi' servin' the king."

"And for this, will France do the bluidy work o' settin' Prince Charlie on the throne?" asked Janet.

"It winna be sae bluidy as ye think. Gin the Prince's feet aince stand on English ground, it will gar a' men see that he is the only true and lawfu' king, and the Highlanders will rise to a man, and mony a secret friend will declare himsel' openly, baith here and in England, when they see us sure o' success."

"Hae ye nae mair than the bare word o' the king that he will help the Prince to his throne; for I hae heard said that the 'word o' a king is a sliddery footin'.'"

"Aye, we ken what he will do. The great and glorious Marechal Saxe will set sail wi' 15,000 men; and 20,000 mair will join us on Scottish soil, and, as we march south, it will be like the tide comin' in."

"Alack; Jamie, maun ye gae south wi' the Prince? Why canna ye bide and haud Scotland, and leave England to the Saxons," said Janet sadly.

But this glorious news was followed quickly by the report of the storm that had scattered the squadron. "And upon the heels o' the storm," added James, sadly crestfallen to bring such news from the meeting which was called to select a deputation to meet the Prince, "'cam' the fleet o' Sir John Norris, wha barely left the Prince a chance o' return to France."

"Aye, Jamie, ye maun wait till ye see how the Prince will fare before ye put your trust in this aid frae France. If they canna place him on English soil, they canna put him on the throne, ye may be sure."

It was a dreary night in the latter part of January when the Laird of Stoneywold rode back, with John by his side, from Kenmuir Hall, where a conference was held, after this disaster. It had been a notable gathering; the McDonalds, Glengarry, and Keppoch were there, the young Lochiel of the Camerons, Roy Stewart, Lord George Murray, and Lord Lewis Gordon, with a host of others more or less closely identified with the cause.

A division of sentiment was apparent; McDonald of Sleat, McLeod of Skye, and Lochiel were for caution and delay, urging the cessation of meetings for a while; while Keppoch, Lord Lewis Gordon, and Stoneywold repudiated, with disgust, this cautious counsel, and were the more ardent because of the cloud that hung upon their prospects.

In the one party were those who had large estates at risk, in the other were the lesser lairds or those who had friends in exile from the rising in 1715.

Muir returned from this meeting full of misgivings, and, as they rode along, gave vent to his feelings.

"I am in a sair strait, John," he said moodily. "Did ye mark how McDonald and McLeod grew wary; and the great chieftains were quick to tak' up wi' their mood."

"Aye," said John, "and it is weel, my Laird, to haud your rein until ye see which way the hare will rin."

"Na, na, John," answered Stoneywold quickly. "Ye mistake me, I didna mean that. I am for Prince Charlie, wi' the Frenchmen or wi'out them. But we lack arms and money; and some lack courage

too. But I am for settlin' this business in our ain way, wi'out the foreigners, gin we can find arms to put in the hands o' our brave Highlanders."

"Ye maun hae mair arms than hands, and that is a sorry pass; for they winna fight your battles. And, my Laird, it seems to me that a man may as weel ken where the road leads, before he pitches down it at a gallop," added John, warily feeling his way.

"Gin a man will gie his king a leal service and win honor for himsel', he maun tak' his life in his hands and trust to Providence and his ain braid claymore," said Muir.

"Aye," retorted John, "I hae seen summat o' that in my day too, when a man has fixit himsel' to be tossed like a cud in a cow's mouth, and always betwixt the grinders. "There is Tullibardine, wha let himsel' gang that gait; and Athole, wi' its braid acres, is in the hands o' his younger brother. Glenbucket has had an owrelang stay in France, and there is Kenmure in his grave, and Winton in the Tower o' London to-day. I'm thinkin', my Laird, that ye winna gang amiss, gin ye tak' counsel wi' the Leddy Janet anent this business and hear what she maun say. Do ye mind how the Laird o' Darnick cam' hame to join his friend Wat Scott; but his Leddy caged him in the donjon, to remain, 'till I tell thee thou'rt wanted by James Stewart or Wat Scott;' and, when frae Darnick towers she saw which wad win the day, 'Now,' she said, 'thou knowest which party to fight for'; and the fendy Leddy set her Laird in the way to win glory and haud his lands too. It is a braw thing to ken whan the par-

ritch is cooked, and not dip in the pot and lift out a raw mess."

James smiled at John's fendy counsel; "I hae had a commission of factory drawn for the Leddy Janet, and she can hold and lease the estate of Stoneywold for her ain use. But my sword I maun gie, wi' my ain hand, to the cause that is right and true."

Then John saw that, with the Laird, motives of prudence had little weight; for his purpose had its root in principles which he held sacred, and in honor, which was not to be weighed in the balance with self-interest.

Subsequent councils of war, if so they might be called, were troublous affairs; the general sentiment being averse to any movement without substantial aid from France, while a few were eager to cast the die, trusting to themselves alone and to the justice of their cause.

Now, when darkness seemed to brood over the cause, Janet exerted herself to cheer James.

"Why canna ye send a trusty messenger to France, Jamie, and not wait for the tidin's that come by wind and wave."

"Ill news travels fast enough, and there seems naught but that kind in the wind just now," answered James, in despondent mood.

Nevertheless he came back from their next meeting, cheered by the result of this suggestion.

"We hae sendit Murray o' Broughton, as messenger, to France, to confer wi' the Prince and tell him how eagerly we wait his comin'," he said more hopefully.

"Aye, Jamie, and it will gar him see that ye are in earnest, and it will stir the French king to gie ye aid," answered Janet.

In the early spring their messenger returned.

"And what news does he bring, Jamie?" asked Janet, eager, for more reasons than one, to know how near the din of war might be.

"The Prince is already on his way, aboard a French brig, which will convoy our privateer *Elizabeth*," said James, breathless with the astounding news.

"And how many Frenchmen does he bring wi' him?" asked Janet.

"He hasna a single ane, but only the seven gentlemen wha hae shared his exile; and they are English, Scotch, and Irish," answered James.

"They may be that; but there arena mony o' each," answered Janet, smiling at the brave array. "But what say Lord Lewis and the rest o' our friends to this news?"

"Alack, they arena merry owre it," answered James; "and wad hae Murray (wham I do not altogether trust), back to the Prince to persuade him that the time is not ripe."

"And that wad be nae mair than the truth," replied Janet. "Ye ken yoursel', Jamie, that the greater lairds are shy o' your gatherings; and they that do come arena at ane."

This was true enough; for, when this return mission was proposed, Murray replied that he had exhausted all arguments to hinder the Prince from setting sail, and to no purpose; then the discussion waxed warm.

"It is simply to put all our estates at forfeit and our necks in the noose, to let this go on," said McDonald of Clanranald.

His cousin of Sleat, who loved to be called "Lord of the Isles," had gone back to his western home, along with McLeod of Skye.

"It is nae mair a noose for a brave man's neck than is every battle for the right," said old Keppoch. "We may win or we may lose, God kens; but we are wi' the right."

"And we canna expect the Prince to put his life in danger, gin we, wha owe him service, are sae fendy o' the risk to oursel's," said Lord Lewis Gordon.

"And for my part," said Stoneywold, "my heart gaes out wi' hope and faith in the star o' destiny which leads the steps o' Prince Charlie, as the star o' Bethlehem led the wise men o' the East."

"Aye," said McDonald, "the Laird o' Stoneywold hasna the years to remember that the star o' the Stuart's has had ither risin's which set in bluid, and led them wha followed it to exile. It doesna shine sae fair as in 1715, and there isna sic a cry wi' which to rally the clans as Montrose, a hundred years syne, could muster them wi', 'Death to the Campbells.' I want only a fair prospect o' winnin', such as the aid o' France will gie us, and then am I heart and soul for raisin' the standard o' the house o' Stuart."

"Ye hae traveled through Duncan Forbes's borders, and hae caught the tone o' his talk. But he can weel afford to support the Elector, wha has made him Lord President and gien him authority enough to hang every Jacobite in Scotland; but there is nae sic a

place waitin' for you, Clanranald," said Gordon bitterly.

"I dinna covet ony sic authority to hang men; for we mete out punishment to the foes o' our house wi' the claymore, and not wi' hemp," replied the western chief sullenly.

"I trust we arena harborin' in our midst the match to that treacherous auld barbarian, Lovat; wha is ready, wi' ane breath, to counsel a hempen cord for his neighbor Duncan Forbes, and, wi' the next, to salute him as Lord President, and curry favor wi' him," said Stoneywold, looking toward Clanranald and Lochiel, who were talking, in whispers, apart from the others.

"What is that?" said Lochiel, stepping across to Stoneywold. "Wha is a traitor?"

"Lord Lovat and a' wha, like him, blaw hot and cold, be they frae east or west," answered Muir firmly.

"I'll let nae man ca' me traitor!" retorted Lochiel.

"And I winna hesitate to ca' ony man a traitor, wha shows himsel' such," answered Muir.

"You maun answer to me for this, my Laird!" said Lochiel, hotly.

"Hold, hold, my Lairds!" said Lord Murray. "We arena met for brawls, but for counsel and help. The Laird o' Stoneywold hasna ca'd ye a traitor, Lochiel. Why wad ye force a quarrel?"

"I wad fain hear that frae the lips o' the Laird himsel'," answered the angry chieftain.

"I say again," said Muir, "that Lovat is a black-hearted villain, wha declares for baith sides; and I

say that Lochiel tak's a strange way to help a cause, when he counsels to tak' nae step to push it forward. I canna believe a Cameron fause, and I ken that they are brave; then what does Lochiel mean?"

"I mean this," answered the young chieftain, "I am sae leal to the Prince that I winna help to ruin him by feckless counsels. There winna be ony sic uprisin' as ye hope for, and ye are beguillin' the Prince's feet into the snare which is spread for them. That is what I mean."

The waning ardor of the Jacobites was roused by the news that the Prince, having borrowed £8000 and secured 1500 firelocks and 1800 broadswords, had set sail, with his suite of three Scotchmen, two Irishmen, and two Englishmen, on June 22, on board the *Elizabeth*, with the *Doutelle* as convoy.

The airy confidence of this expedition awoke the enthusiasm of the devotees and the scorn of the wavering.

"It will rouse the Highlands to a man," said old Keppoch; "for they love a man wha can do and dare."

"What say you, Lord George," said Lochiel, turning to Murray, who was a recognized leader in their councils.

"I fear me the day for such methods of warfare are over," answered Lord Murray. "We must remember that we are to meet disciplined armies, and we cannot do it without men and means. The larger chiefs, with the greater following, will hold aloof, and we can count on little from the Lowlands and England."

"Can we do less than the Prince, who is ready to risk all?" said Muir. "Courage begets courage. Can we not reckon that this will count for something, my Lord; for my part, this news stirs my blood like the slogan."

"He who has lost all, does not take much risk on the next venture, my Laird o' Stoneywold. Are you willin', at the echo o' a few brave words, to hazard the fate o' your Leddy and bairns and fine estate on the chances o' war, wi' such a nucleus for an army?" answered Lord Murray.

"For my part, no man can question the loyalty o' our house, but I winna rush to ruin mysel,' nor let my Prince be led on to his undoin'. Our cause will prevail; but we must make ready like sane men to meet our foe," said Lochiel.

What was there to say in answer to this? but what was there to do, save wait for the turn of events. Soon there came conflicting rumors of the affair off Lizard Point, on July 9, when Captain Brett, with the *Lion*, attacked the rebel vessels. The *Lion* had to put back to port for repairs, and many of her crew asserted that the *Doutelle* was in far worse case, and would have good luck if she made her way back to France. The half-hearted looked on this as the final decree of fate, and the most sanguine could scarce pluck any hope from such disaster.

When their fears had well-nigh gotten the better of their hopes, there came a secret messenger, bearing through all the clans, on his ride from the west, the news that the Prince with his conglomerate suite had landed, on July 23, on the little isle of

Eriskay, on the western edge of the gulf of the Hebrides.

It was a barren bit of land, a bare foothold for the Prince, who came in a gloomy season, when drenching rain and thick mist gave but a dreary welcome to one who had lived in the marble halls of Italy.

He was lodged in the tacksman's hut, distinguished from the others only in size. In common with the rest, it had a peat fire in the corner, with a hole in the roof for the escape of the surplus smoke.

All this, the messenger from Sir John McDonald told the assemblage of gentlemen hastily summoned at Lord Lewis Gordon's to hear the news.

"And how does the Prince bear himsel'?" asked Stoneywold, when the silence which followed the announcement had become ominous.

"Aweel, ye maun better spier hoo he tholes the uncanny weather and the reek o' the peat, whilk is new to his nostrils. He is our ain king, mayhap; but he isna Hieland born nor bred; for the puir laddie is weel-nigh chokit to death wi' the reek. And whiles he bides oot in the rain, wi' the water tricklin' frae his head, and whiles he bides in the hut, till the tears rin frae his e'en; but he can thole neither rain nor reek sair lang. And auld Angus McDonald, wi' wham he bides, glunches owre him, and says to me: 'What a plague ails yon fellow that he winna sit nor stand still, and canna bide but nor ben?' "

"But does he bear himsel' brawlie, in sic dull company and donsie weather?" said Stoneywold, seeking to elicit a gleam of brightness for this dull picture.

"Ah! he is a braw laddie," answered the McDonald. "What he broods owre wha kens, save those wha ken the thochts o' kings; but he bears himsel' right bonnily. Whiles he broods, and then will whistle like a laverock, to a tune blither than a bagpipe; but he is unco restless and spiers owre the water, as though he were waitin' for ane wha is lang o' comin'."

At this conference it was decided to send Clanranald's brother, McDonald of Boisdale, to the Prince; and with him went John Gunn, Stoneywold remaining at home, where stanch friends were needed to counteract the influence of the wavering ones.

McDonald came to the Prince, loyal in heart, but firm in the conviction that it was madness to persist.

"What has induced your Highness to put your person in such peril and run such grave risks as are involved in a campaign without men or means?" was his salutation. "We, to whom your cause and person are dear, cannot bear to think of the issue of such a venture."

"I am surprised at such a salutation from a faithful friend of my house," answered the Prince coldly. "I follow the star of destiny, which leads me on to regain the throne of my fathers, and, on Scottish soil, I had looked to find unflinching loyalty."

"But how will your Highness wage war without men?" answered McDonald, taking no note of the implied reproach.

"I will trust to my faithful Highlanders," replied the Prince haughtily.

"But can your Highness name me a chief who will

rally to your standard, without the aid of France?" said McDonald.

"There are my loyal subjects in Skye, McDonald of Sleat and the Lord of McLeod," answered the Prince.

"I can assure your Highness that they have declared themselves on the other side," replied McDonald.

"Then have I naught to do with men; they may come or they may go, I follow the star of my destiny," answered the Prince.

John Gunn, in detailing the scene to Stoneywold, said, "McDonald might hae spared his breath for a better use; for the Prince was sae sicker o' his trusty Highlanders that he recked not o' ane and anither wha had forgotten the faith o' their fathers, and declared that for ane chief wha failed him there wad rise up a hunder men wha wad rin to fight for him."

And McDonald came back with a dim superstition that the destiny, which, like a halo, surrounded the Prince, was not wholly a figment of his imagination.

The next visitor to the Prince was the chief of Clanranald, who found him not in the tacksman's hut on Eriskay, but on board the *Doutelle* at anchor in Loch Na Nuagh, off Clanranald's country. Under the awning which covered the deck a repast was spread, and the Prince, in noble and gracious fashion, received his distinguished visitors. Clanranald and his cousin of Kinloch-Moidart, who accompanied him, were firm in their discouragement of the undertaking.

"Does your Highness appreciate the thorough mili-

tary preparation of England, with her army of veterans drilled and well accoutered?" said Clanranald.

"My training, gentlemen, in foreign parts, has led me to know as much, or more of this, than it has fallen to your lot to see. The armies of England are not invincible, I can assure you," answered the Prince.

"But your Highness has not seen the want of discipline which our men show on the field. We shall require time not only to gather, but also to drill our men," said the chief. "We are in want of arms, too, and everything that goes to make up preparation for war."

"I have brought you arms. Would God I had brought you the desire to take them up," said the Prince.

"Is your Highness aware that our friends are divided, by reason of your coming among us unaware; that an urgent demand was made that you should return, until the time was ripe for rising?" said Kinloch-Moidart.

"I was led to believe that I should find, at any hour, my loyal men of Scotland ready to cast off the yoke of the oppressor, and I am fain to think better of your hearts than of your tongues, gentlemen. Destiny knows no hour, but marches on without let or hindrance from the dull minutes which measure the life of those who toil like slaves under the master's lash," answered the Prince.

"Many were greatly disheartened, your Highness, by the promised aid from France, which, not being

forthcoming, has made them feel that they are left to bear an undue burden," said Clanranald.

"It is well that I shall owe the glory of winning my throne to my own loyal Scots, rather than to foreign aid. I can trust to convincing you, gentlemen, that I am led by destiny, which nothing can withstand. The divine right to the throne which is mine, will bring to my side the power to obtain it."

While this debate went on young Ranald McDonald listened, with glowing eyes, not daring to join in it with words. The Prince caught his eye, aglow with fervor, and turned to the stripling with the flattering appeal:

"Will you not assist me, sir?"

"I will, your Highness, wi' my last drap o' bluid!" responded the young Highlander, flushing red.

"You see, gentlemen, how the spark kindles in the breast which has not learned the cold maxims of worldly caution," said the Prince.

The two chiefs stood abashed, for a moment, then, catching the infection, they pledged themselves by a like vow; and, in token of their loyalty, invited the Prince to land; and Clanranald assigned him a body-guard from his clan.

Immediately upon the landing of the Prince a summons was sent to the two great Skye chieftains, which elicited a flat refusal, shedding gloom over the hearts of his followers, but in no wise cooling the ardor of the Prince's dauntless hope.

Sunshine and shadow, in swift alternation, flickered across the path of this young heir of the house of Stuart on his way to the throne, and fell athwart the

hearts of his followers; but left him, always, with a changeless faith and purpose.

A gleam of sunshine followed the recusancy of the island chieftains. Donald Cameron, the "young Lochiel" as he was called, came to persuade the Prince that there was every reason why he should abandon the attempt; but, when reason and destiny lock antlers, there can be but one issue to the struggle; and Lochiel, too, gave in his adherence.

Messengers were at once sent out to all the clans, and the Prince began his march westward from Clanranald's county to Kinloch-Moidart, thence to Glenadale, where Gordon of Glenbucket joined him.

The clans were summoned to meet at Glenfinnan, near the head of Loch Eil and Loch Shiel, on August 19.

"We cam' there about noon," said John, describing the scene to Stoneywold, "and there were scarce fifty men, and they all McDonalds; wha are guid men and true, but unco wild. Barrin' them, the glen was empty, save some bairns frae the hamlet near by, wha gowked and girmed on the Prince, and were an unkempt pack o' gomerils. But the bonnie young Prince rode gayly up and down the glen, as though a' Scotland were his, wi' nane to dispute it wi' him. But whan our hearts were nigh saft as a haggis, we were ware o' a piper wha piped the pibroch, that it was guid to listen to it, and, alang the crest o' the hill, we saw, against the sky, a braw host o' Highland men, 800 strong, and down the glen they cam', rushin' and shoutin' the slogan o' the Camerons, wi' the douce young Lochiel at their head. Aye, but it was

a bonnie sight, to gladden the e'en and stir the bluid o' a man wha loves the gay plaids o' the Highland men. And, before nightfall, there were nigh twa thousand men in Glenfinnan. And, gin ye could hae seen auld Tullibardine o' Athole bear the standard o' the Prince, while the proclamation was bein' read, it wad hae dune your heart guid. Our gracious King, James VIII., set a' matters right that were gane wrang, in his lang absence frae the country, and made the bonnie Prince Charlie his regent, wi' a' needed power to regain the throne. Then our guid Prince proclaimed free forgiveness to a' wha had taen arms under the Elector, and made guid a' the back pay to his officers and men, baith in army and navy.

"The next day we marched on for Fort William, and we met the foe and won our first victory, at Highbridge. It was a sma' skirmish, ye may say, a mere straw; but it garred the wind blaw frae the right airt; for it was the report o' this that made the Saxon General Cope, when he met us at Corryarick Pass, turn frae the Highland road, and mak' his way, wi' due speed, to Inverness. He had lost his likin' for the hills and the scent o' the heather, and the peat-reek garred him shiver. The braes and glens rang wi' the slogan o' the clans, when our scouts brought word that the Saxons had refused the road up the pass and taen their way to the pent-house o' Inverness. 'They are aye fond o' a warm bed and a tight roof owre their heads,' said Lochiel. 'Aye, the peat-reek gars them snivel save when they get it in usquebaugh,' said Clanranald. But the Prince aye said

naething, but smiled and bid them move on to Holyrood."

The next news was of the march to Perth, with none to dispute their way, followed by the inspiring tidings of the capture of this ancient residence of the Scottish monarchs.

Just one hundred years ago, it had been seized by Montrose, and, in the late uprising, by the Earl of Mar. Did there cross the young Prince's mind a thought of how ill-starred had been the fate of the previous captors of the "Fair City," or how, three centuries ago, it had become famous as the scene of the murder of one of the wisest and best of Scotland's kings, patriot and poet? But "wha kens the thoughts o' kings."

Now all went merrily; the Highlanders in their picturesque garb, led by the Prince clad in the national costume richly bedecked with gold lace, such as was never seen on Highland costume, drew crowds of sightseers, as to a show.

But they were to pay the piper; for the Prince, who entered Perth with one guinea in his pocket, left it with £500 in hand.

At Perth the Laird of Stoneywold was summoned to attend the Prince. Janet waited impatiently for his return, wondering whether he would come back, or march southward with the army.

"What news, Jamie?" she said, bravely enough so far as outward sign went.

"Ah! he is a bonnie Prince, my Janet; and weel may we gie him our service," began Stoneywold.

"Aye, aye, Jamie, I ken that; but what has he set ye to do?" broke in Janet.

"Ah! that is not sae bonnie. I hae commission, along wi' Lord Lewis Gordon, to raise men in the shire o' Aberdeen, and circumvent the plans o' Duncan Forbes o' Culloden, wha seeks to win awa' the clans and hinder the wark o' recruitin'," answered Muir.

"Ah! now I will ca' him a bonnie Prince," said Janet, with a great sigh of relief.

"It suits me ill to be tied down to sic tame business; but whan I plead to gae south wi' him he answered me: 'Ye can tell us o' your victory owre Cope's army in our Palace o' Holyrood, my Laird; and your reward shall equal your service and high loyalty;' and I was fain to be content."

"I ca' that a bonnie Prince; and will gladly hear more o' the takin' o' Perth, now, Jamie," answered Janet.

"Aweel, I saw naething o' this but a braw set o' Highland laddies march into the town, and a' men speakin' them fair. And the day was a fine sight when Jennie Cameron rode into the camp at the head o' twa hundred and fifty claymores. She was on a bay geldin' decked in green trappin's and trimmed wi' gold. Her hair hung down her back, clasped wi' twa silver buckles, and she had on a velvet cap wi' scarlet feathers. In her hand she carried a drawn sword, and her men cam' on behind singin'

" Miss Jenny Cameron
She pit her belt and hanger on
And awa' to bonnie Prince Charlie.

And the Prince gave her a commission of Colonel."

"'Jennie Cameron may awa,' but I am sair happy to ken that my Jamie can serve the cause o' Prince Charlie in Aberdeen," said Janet; to which James was not unkind enough to reply that he wished he could march with Prince Charlie.

On September 11 the Prince set out, in great state, from Perth on his southward march. Shunning the passage of the Firth of Forth and also the bridge near Stirling Castle, which might be taxed with a toll that he did not care to pay and could not well refuse; they bore to the westward and around the fords of Frew. The only sign of an enemy was the dragoons of Colonel Gardiner, who watched their crossing and fell back before the victorious host.

Past Bannockburn, with its glorious memories, on through Falkirk and Linlithgow to Edinburgh, they pressed forward, with flying banners; there the Prince promised he would hold court in Holyrood, after a royal fashion.

What need to dwell upon the easy capture of the ancient city. It was defenseless, except the castle; and the counsels of the authorities were vacillating and divided. Incompetent civilians made vain military preparations for defense, while the terror-stricken magistrates and people watched, with longing eyes, for the sails of the fleet which was to bring General Cope's army from the north. The clang of the fire bells summoned the alarmed citizens to a town meeting, and they ran hither and thither, not knowing what the summons meant, nor where to gather, nor what was the business on hand. When they were come together, some clamored for immediate surren-

der, and a few for stern resistance. Then suddenly the meeting was flooded with the manifestoes of the Prince, and the clamor for surrender grew beyond control, and the magistrates beat a hasty retreat from their own townhall.

A deputation of citizens was formed to obtain terms of capitulation from the Prince, and, as a party of Highlanders under Lochiel, who were sent to blow up one of the gates, saw the Nether Bow Port open for the exit of the coach carrying the deputation, they slipped in, displaced the civil guard, and themselves mounted guard in the interest of His Royal Highness Charles Edward, without waste of powder or of blood.

On the next morning, in gay attire, with waving banners and fine old Scotch martial music, the Prince entered the city and trod the halls of Holyrood, which, for more than threescore years, had not echoed to the footsteps of a Stuart.

What more was needed to set the seal to the subtle creed of the divine right of kings and the destiny of the Stuarts, by which the feet of this Prince had been set in the palace of his fathers.

From the Old Cross of Edinburgh, where, from immemorial times, the Scottish kings were wont to proclaim royal edicts "in glorious trumpet clang," with heraldic splendor and in presence of a mighty multitude, the Prince caused the edict of King James and his own proclamation of amnesty and largess to be read again.

Perchance this gallant youth had never heard the

tale of how, more than two hundred years before, when a King of Scotland undertook to play the part of knight errant to a Queen of France, and, as her bounden champion, she laid it on him to march, for her sake, three miles on English ground, and he had assembled one hundred thousand men to do her bidding; there appeared at dead of night, at the Old Cross, a ghostly herald, in form and fashion like a herald of the Scottish Kings, who called a muster-roll of the Scots gentry to meet his master in the other world. Happily there was one awake, who heard the ghostly summons, and took appeal therefrom to the mercy of God; and all, save he, made answer, on the fatal field of Flodden, with their lives.

But the shadows of the past were not upon this youth.

In the meantime, General Cope with his army had arrived by the sea, landed at Dunbar, and re-enforced by Gardiner's dragoons and the refugees from the city, was marching on Edinburgh.

The Highlanders were eager to meet the foe, undisciplined as they were, many of them armed only with axes, scythes, or any available tool. Clad almost in rags, they were full of enthusiasm.

On September 21st, at the village of Prestonpans, Cope halted to await the attack of the Highlanders. He posted his troops among the houses, using the stone walls of their enclosures as breastworks, having his front toward a broad morass which lay between him and his foe. This bog could be crossed only by a line of stepping-stones, which were exposed to a

murderous fire. As the twilight fell, the English commander settled himself securely for the night, prepared for the attack on the morrow.

But the situation offered an opportunity for the favorite tactics of the Highlanders, a night march and a surprise. By a long detour to the eastward they could reach a point where the bog narrowed into a deep ravine, down which the gathered waters of the morass clattered noisily; here they could cross and fall on the left and rear of their unsuspecting foe.

In this action John Gunn took part, having arrived in the camp, bearing dispatches from Lord Lewis Gordon, on the eve of the battle.

"I cam' at nigh midnight to the place where, by a' accounts, I should hae found our army," he said to the gathering of gentlemen, to whom, on his return, he recounted the affair; "but a' was sae still that, though the night was clear, I wadna hae kenned I was in the midst o' an army, hadna I met a band o' horsemen. I asked them to lead me to the Prince, and, whan they spiered my business, told them I bore letters frae Laird Gordon and was baillie o' the Laird o' Stoneywold. They led me through the lines, and, as I walked between the winrows o' laddies fast asleep on the ground, happed in their plaids like bairnies, nane o' them stirred as I passed to the Prince's tent. It was a bit uncanny to see sic a heap o' men and nae sign o' life, and I was glad whan, at a word frae Lord George Murray, the sentries passed down the lines and, wi' a silent shake, brought the laddies to their feet.

"When they were a' in their ranks the Prince

steppit bonnily to the fore and said, 'Follow me, gentlemen; by the help o' God I will this day mak' ye a free and happy people.' Ah! it garred my bluid rin hot frae my heart to hear him, and I wad hae followed him to the gates o' hell. As we gang owre the bog, the Prince leadin' the way, but bein' no wise used to travel by this sort o' conveyance, he missed ane o' the steppin'-stanes, and was up to his knees in the bog. I clouted the mire frae his breeks wi' my ain hands.

"'Your Highness will need to step wi' care,' said Lord George; 'for a man maun easy miss the stanes in the dark, gin he forgets the stride to which they are set.'

"Wi' a bonnie laugh, Prince Charlie answers: 'Aye, my good Murray, but step by step we gae on to glory, and the stanes that a Stuart treads are set to his feet by destiny, and gin he miss ane, he will be sure to land on the next.' To which Lord George made no answer; but I couldna help but think to mysel' 'for a' that it is fendy to keep in step wi' the stanes.' When we were weel owre the stanes and the night was wearin' awa', we formed quickly and silently, in three battalions, the twa to the fore were McDonald's led by the Duke o' Perth, the Camerons, Stewarts, and McGregors led by Lord George, wha is always to the fore; in rear o' these were the Athole men, Drummonds, and Robertsons led by Laird Nairn.

"Swift and tently we swept down on the foe, and were close hand before the dowie sentinels kenned that the Highland laddies were upon them. They had to

face about, so that the stane walls, that were to be their bield, were now their slaughter-bught; for we were on them, before they were fairly about. The laddies cam' on a sharp trot, fired their pieces aince, then flung them awa', and ilka man leapit wi' a yell on his neist foe. They parted like sheep, in a moment; fenced in by their breastworks, which were their undoin'. Foot to foot, hand to hand, lookin' straight in ane anither's e'en, they fought like deils. It was savage wark, a bloody sword-cut fight, and minded me o' the tales o' battles fought lang syne. The Prince grew sick o' it and, ridin' in amang the men, bid them spare his father's subjects; and Lord George, Drummond, and Lochiel did their best to stay the slaughter. It was sair sad, the way they mowed them down; and, aboon a', it garred my verra heart bleed to see their brave Colonel Gardiner. Sair wounded by a Lochaber ax, he set himsel' to muster the routed men and fetch them aff the field. He stood like a guid man, and I wad fain hae seen him spared; but ane o' those wild western McDonalds fell on him, wi' a scythe blade, and put an end to a noble life. But the lave o' their officers were wild to get out o' reach o' harm's way, and save their thin hides frae bein' punctured; they'd be grand on a foottrace."

And this opinion of John's was endorsed by their own General Lord Kerr, who received, at Berwick, the first news of this defeat from the officers in command; and he greeted them with this savage comment: "Good God! gentlemen, I have seen some battles and heard of many, but never before of the

first news of defeat being brought by the general officers."

"But what did ye get out o' this victory, John?" asked Stoneywold.

"Aweel, we put an end to Cope's army; and we laid hold o' their treasure-chest containin' £2500, and there was fine booty o' arms and clothin' and self-movin' watches, which so pleased some o' the laddies that they went back to their glens, to hang the trophies in their huts."

"What was done with the prisoners?" asked Lord Gordon.

"Aweel, there were many o' them sent to a far, far country, and the rest to an island in Loch Clunie, in the Athole country. And the next day Prince Charlie went back to Edinburgh, wi' great glory. He is gentle and gracious to a' men, and the grand balls at Holyrood bring the lairds and leddies about him, a' wearin' the white cockade. I saw him touch for the king's evil; and a' men speak him fair, save ane old Covenanter minister, wha has a kirk close under the castle guns, and prays that 'the young man come amang us to win an earthly crown may soon receive frae the Lord the crown o' glory.' But there is naught come o' that, yet."

"How many have they recruited?" asked Lord Gordon.

"Aweel, they are 6000 strong, I hear," answered John; "but the city tradesmen hae nae likin' for war."

"I hear, too," said Lord Lewis, "that the clergy hold aloof, and the bankers refuse to take their treasure from the castle; is this true?"

"Aweel," answered John, "the public moneys hae been seized, and the Crown claims are paid in favor o' King James; but the bankers hae their funds out o' reach, I hear."

"But what matters it, my Laird," interposed Stoneywold, "that the tradesmen hold aloof; we get on bravely wi'out them, and they are ill suited to bear arms. Excepting Inverness and Edinburgh Castle, and a few small forts, a' Scotland is ours to-day."

"And the Prince didna tak' the Castle," added John, "because the barbarous general in command declared that he wad bombard the town, if he did. And when the citizens besought the Prince to save them from this cruelty, he graciously consented to forego the capture of the Castle, at such a price."

Shortly after John's return Lord Lewis and Stoneywold were summoned to a council of war.

Lord Murray briefly summed up the questions which confronted them.

"My Lords and gentlemen, we have to face the question as to what our next step shall be. There is no sign of an English or even of a Lowland rising. There is no immediate prospect of foreign aid. Our success has been wonderful; but we must not let it blind us. Can we hold Scotland with a force of 6000 men? General Wade is marching up the east coast with an army reputed to be larger than our own. We must meet the question now."

"Gentlemen," interposed the Prince, "I will not have you waste words upon the situation; it is my purpose to march on London."

For a moment all were aghast at this announcement.

“This is to provoke disaster, your Highness,” said Lochiel. “Our Highland men cannot meet the English on their own soil.”

“And yet, my Lairds,” said Murray, to whom they all looked to save them from this mad proposal, “I do not see what better we can do. We cannot await the English army here with the Castle in the enemy’s hands. On our march southward we can keep to the west, which is defenseless, and where we will be among friends of the cause. It will give an aspect of success, which will win us friends mayhap, and afford opportunity for an English uprising, or a French invasion.

The adhesion of Lord George to the plan was followed by the rest of the leaders; and so they took up their march southward, in the latter part of October, 300 dragoons and thirteen Highland regiments, with the Lowlanders and broken clansmen in three other regiments. They were in fine heart and condition, having spent six weeks in the richest part of Scotland. On reaching the Border, however, many of the Highlanders, with superstitious dread of English soil, disappeared and made their stealthy way back to their mountain retreats.

The Prince reached Carlisle on November 10, and summoned the city and castle to surrender. The doughty little Mayor had made boast that he was no Scots Patterson, but a loyal English Pattison; and he was ready to defy this rebel horde. But the guns on the wall were found to be useless, and Colonel Durand, in command of the fort, found his volunteers deserting him to a man, and so both

town and castle fell an easy prey to the victorious Prince.

On November 18 he entered Carlisle, on a white horse, gayly caparisoned, with a hundred pipers playing before him; and the shrill music, strange garb, and uncouth speech of the Highlanders struck terror to the hearts of the citizens.

With the story of this march of unhindered conquest, the Laird of Stoneywold confirmed the position that he had taken from the first, that destiny had chosen this young Prince for the throne.

But there came no report of recruits flocking to the standard. The English Jacobites seemed, one and all, of the same mind as the daughter of Howard of Castle Corby, who entertained the Prince with state in the oak parlor, and sent him on his way with the empty prayer, "May God bless him."

At Preston, the populace shouted and rang the bells; but did not join the ranks. When Janet commented on this, James's answer was: "It is early yet to expect recruits."

He proudly recounted the next success at Manchester, where the loyalty of the citizens was testified by the subsidy of £3000 granted to the Prince; and where 200 recruits joined his standard.

"But that was ever counted a most loyal section," replied Janet.

"Aye, but the English are cold-hearted; when the Prince has taen London, we will see their temper change," answered James.

"It is late to fight when the battle is ended," said Janet.

"Aye, we must win it by our ain hands; and then they will submit, wi'out a struggle," he replied.

"But when will he take London?" asked Janet.

"On the first of December he left Manchester for London; and, for a' that we know, the messengers are on the way, now, to tell us that it is ours."

But the bearers of that message were never dispatched; for, at Macclesfield, they received news that the Duke of Cumberland was in Staffordshire with a large army, and another army awaited them on Finchley Common; and they halted to take counsel.

CHAPTER XII.

“ALL O’ERS ARE ILL, EXCEPT O’ER THE WATER
AND O’ER THE HILL.”

THE tide was at the flood. Up to this point their career had been a romance; cities and fortresses had fallen before them. They had marched through three hundred miles of an enemy’s country without any base of supplies or any line of retreat save that which Providence kept open for them; they had eluded two armies, each larger than their own; and now, with 4500 men, were within 130 miles of London, with two armies between them and Scotland.

They had struck terror into the hearts of their enemies. The king is said to have had his most precious effects embarked in barges, for instant flight; the Duke of Newcastle is reputed to have shut himself up for a whole day, accessible to none, debating whether he should transfer his allegiance to the Prince.

In the meanwhile there was a reaction in Scotland.

Lord Lewis came to Stoneywold with the report of the troublous times at Edinburgh, Perth, and Dundee: “The burghers threaten the unco small garrisons which are left to hold these cities.”

“My scouts bring me the same story frae the West,” replied Muir. “Duncan Forbes holds a firm

'hand not only on the men o' Skye, but on others wha control full 10,000 men. John Gunn tells me that even the treacherous old barbarian Lovat stands in awe of Forbes."

"And yet," said Gordon, "I ken that he sent to the Prince a secret messenger counseling that Forbes be secured dead or alive."

"Aye," said Stoneywold, "but it cooled his ardor for the Prince when he found that he wasna made Duke of Fraser; and now he will curry favor with Forbes, and sent to him bemoaning that his son had joined the Prince with 1500 men, which he had bid him do; but first he bid him capture Forbes, and carry him prisoner to the Prince. But Forbes knew his neighbors, and had fortified Culloden House."

"He had Lovat in durance, as a hostage, I heard," said Gordon.

"Aye," answered Muir, "but he is not easily held; the wily old fox was soon free; but he dreads the trap, and will let Forbes alone now."

"But, my Laird, I have brave news from abroad: our treaty with France is made; and Lord John Drummond, who, being born in France, is a French citizen, has set sail at the head of a thousand men," said Gordon.

"And this not only gives us an addition to our force, but we can demand that the English troops, withdrawn from the Continent under parole, shall not be brought into the field against these French troops," said Muir. "The recruiting in Aberdeen is but slow work, my Laird, and we are sorely in need of some help," added Stoneywold.

"I shall force a levy, my Laird," answered Gordon; "and demand one well-found soldier for every £100 of valued rent, or £5 substitute money."

"It winna do, my Laird," said Muir. "It will bring riot and bloodshed."

"Then their blood be on their own heads," answered Gordon. "We have to deal wi' a low-minded set, wha count the cost to themsel's rather than their duty to their Prince."

"Aye, my Laird," replied Muir, "but it is an unco hard task to gar men see wi' your eyes; we maun content oursel's wi' strivin' to mak' ane man do the wark o' twa."

This recruiting made Stoneywold a marked man in the community; and it was with many misgivings that Janet saw him ride off on these errands; for her loyalty did not extend to the sacrifice of her husband for the cause.

"It isna work for you to be at, Jamie," she pleaded. "You were made to lead men, not to drive and tax them, and hoard up their malice against you."

"Ah! Janet," he answered, "gin every man is to pick and choose, we may as well gie owre. Lord Lewis is ready to do it, and I canna say it is not fit work for me."

"Lord Gordon can suit himsel'," replied Janet; "but I ken this is work for a recruiting sergeant; and you are fit for better things."

"The work that is needed is the work for me," he answered gayly, as he rode off to Aberdeen. The town was in a state of excitement, and John Gunn,

hearing muttered threats on every hand, begged his Laird to let the business rest.

"Bide a wee, my Laird, till we hear frae the south that the Prince has taen London; then the tide will tak' a turn, till we canna enroll the men as fast as they flock to us."

"Wherefore should I bide till the work is done; and I must feel that I had nae hand in it?" answered Muir.

"Aweel, do not gang abroad to-day," plead John.

"It will be a sorry day," replied Muir, "when I amna free to walk the streets o' a Scottish city;" and he strode down Broad Street.

Scarce had he gone half-way to the recruiting station when one Reid, a barber, in an excess of loyalty, and smarting under Lord Gordon's exaction of substitute money, fired at him from a second-story window.

The street was full of people and there was great consternation at the unexpected shot; but the Laird of Stoneywold halted under the window, and, drawing himself up to his full six feet two, invited the knight of the razor to come down, and he would show him fair play before the townsmen; which invitation the barber saw fit not to accept.

But now the French contingent were on hand, and, joining their Scotch recruits to these, Lord Lewis and Stoneywold started on their westward march.

Janet bid her Jamie good-by with a brave face, and he waved his adieu from the head of his column, proud of the trust reposed in him, and sure that he would win honors which Janet would share with him.

No such hope sustained Helen in parting with John. This Prince Charlie had no titles or favors within his gift that could atone for the taking away of her John. She was wholly on the side of old Sandy and Gordon McDonald, who had used all their powers of warning and persuasion to keep the Laird and John from espousing the Prince's cause.

With John it was not a matter of politics, but of devotion to his Laird and chief.

"Ye ken what I owe to the Laird. He stood between me and the halter; and the neck he saved is his."

"But what gars the Laird rin after this feckless Prince Charlie?" said Helen. "Where is he gane noo? He is in London, they say. Aweel, there let him bide, and let my John bide at hame."

"Aye," broke in old Sandy, "ye hae the richt o' it, lassie. Let the twa kings fight it oot, gin they be minded to wrastle for the crown; and let honest folk bide at hame and mind their ain affairs."

"But that isna the way o' the warld," remarked John sententiously. "Whan kings fa' oot wi' ane anither, the bluid o' men maun rin to settle the quarrel."

"Aye," retorted Sandy, "the Scripture saith 'the way o' the warld warketh death,' and it is e'en sae. I am sair weary o' this fightin' amang neebors and kin-folk for a man wha will not content himsel' wi' the orderin's o' Providence, but maun crown himsel' wi' the bluid o' honest men."

"Wi' me it isna the quarrel o' the kings, but the service o' Stoneywold; and gin he is to the war, I am

by his side, for life or for death," said John; and this closed the discussion, save for old Sandy's parting shot, "Aweel, John, ye hae my disapprobation, and my prayers."

As the winter drew on, word came that a party of McLeods were across the Spey, on their way to clear Aberdeenshire of insurgents, and stop the recruiting for the Prince.

"Let them come," said John, "we'll show them which will clear the shire. They are best on their bit island, the mainland is unco braid for them to find their way about."

"John, ye may find that the McLeods can crack a crown," answered Stoneywold. "It suits me ill to lead Frenchmen agen Highlanders, wha should be wi' us. But sae must it be; and we maun do our duty even though others forget their fealty."

The two forces met at Inverurie; and the men of Aberdeen, after a short, sharp fight sent the McLeods back to the west. This success, and the gathering of the Frasers at Perth under Lord Strathallan, as an army of reserve, gave life to the hopes of the Prince's men, and made them eager for news of victory from the south.

"What news frae London, Lord Lewis?" asked Stoneywold, as soon as the messenger from Lord George was gone.

"The news is not from London. The Prince is on his way back to Scotland, pursued by the Duke of Cumberland with a large army," said Lord Gordon; and he told him the story of the retreat to Carlisle.

James was leaving camp to pay a visit to Janet.

When he reached home she read ill news in his face, and without delay he told it to her.

"Our men, wha carried, each man, his rations in a meal-pock, and lay down at night under the open sky, happed in their plaids, easily outstripped the Duke marching; but, at Clifton, his dragoons overtook our rear guard, under Lord George, wha is always betwixt the Prince and danger. He sent for more men, and, when these were refused him, he posted those he had, which were Roy Stewart's men, the McPhersons, and the Glengarry McDonalds, so that he had a hedge on one side, and the wall o' the Lonsdale inclosures on the other. The sky was full o' broken clouds, and by the moonlight, through a rift, our men saw the dragoons, dismounted, creepin' on them; and Lord George ordered a charge at once, and, by a' accounts, the Highland men made short work o' my Lord Duke's dragoons. We hear that they got such a taste o' claymore as lasted them till our men reached Carlisle."

"And where is the Prince now?" asked Janet.

"He left a garrison in Carlisle, and marched to Glasgow; where, by a' accounts, they held a fine Christmas jubilee and made a noble levy on the rich traders, at which they were sae angered that their dames hae declared that the Prince is far frae good-lookin', and they wadna attend his ball;" and Muir laughed merrily. "We hae sent John for orders, and he will be back, wi' the next news, in a day or two."

"And what will ye do now, Jamie? Canna ye just bide at hame?"

“Na, na, Janet, we must wait our orders frae Lord George; but they winna be to bide at hame.”

Two days later John came back with a batch of news which one might regard as good or bad, according to his humor.

“The Duke is gane back to London, and General Hawley, wha by a’ accounts is brutal alike to friend and foe, was set to chase ‘the rabble,’ as he ca’s us. He made merry owre the mischances o’ Wade and Cope, and wanted only the chance to meet us. Aweel, and he had it. We were layin’ siege to Stirlin’ Castle, and he cam’ on to Falkirk. He was at breakfast wi’ Lady Kilmarnock, when they spoiled his parritch wi’ the news that our men were makin’ for the high ground o’ the moor, overlookin’ his camp. The information was true, but a bit late. Up frae the table he sprang, and wi’ bare-head rode through the storm, his gray hair streamin’ in the wind, and he shoutin’ orders to his dragoons to sieze the high ground. It was a fine race; but we had the start, and reached the mound first, but in stragglin’ fashion; and Hawley shouted for the dragoons to charge, which they did, with the infantry, in double line, close behind them. The dragoons were on us so quick that they were in amang our lines; and we fought hand to hand, while the storm beat on us. Our second line was comin’ on, and, when the dragoons drew back to form for anither charge, they gave them a rakin’ fire, which made them waver for a minute; and then, wi’ the slogan soundin’ wild and free, our men swept down the hill. There was naething could stand against that glorious rush, and the Saxons scattered

as if the storm was blawin' them to every airt; leavin' not less than three hundred dead on the field."

"Ah! John, it was a rare chance. I wish I had taen the dispatch mysel'," said Stoneywold.

But Janet was more than glad that he had not.

But, now, they heard of the Duke of Cumberland at Edinburgh to take command in person, and that the siege of Stirling was raised, and the Highland army were coming back to their own land. The Prince, with one division, took the Highland road by Blair Athole, and Lord George, with the other, came up through Aberdeen; they were to winter at Inverness.

With forces combined, they were now on their own soil, and their hopes ran high. They would recruit, through the winter, and open the spring campaign with a strong force of Scotch and a substantial contingent of French troops.

The Prince came near paying dear for his confidence in his leal Scotch subjects. Riding far in advance of his army, attended by Lord Gordon, Muir, and three other gentlemen, he stopped, over night, at Moy House, the seat of government of the Clan McIntosh.

While at dinner a shepherd came in, with the news that a party of McLeods were on the borders of the estate. While the Prince and his suite rode away toward the army, John Gunn remained behind, as a scout.

Down by the burn was a cluster of cottages, around the blacksmith shop, where John was wont to while away many an hour "haein' his cracks wi' the smith, wha is a douce man and leal to the cause," he said.

In return for the news of the neighborhood, John told him stories of the war, battles, night marches, and overwhelming surprises of the enemy, which tickled the old Jacobite. Hither John repaired, when the gentlemen left, and confided to his friend Angus, the smith, and three of his cronies, that he was acting as rear guard to the Prince and his attendants, who were riding away from a band of McLeods.

Angus proposed that they organize for defense. "We will gang down by the burn, along the track the thievin' McLeods maun tak', and we'll post oursel's. I ken where the road breaks through a hollow, wi' a fir copse on ane side, and we'll put Lang Jock in command."

"Aweel," said John, nothing loath, "not to be outdone by freend Angus, I'll form ye into four divisions, and appoint each o' ye to a sole and separate command."

"Will we fight at close grups or lang range," asked the smith's blower, who had his misgivings.

"My notion," said Angus, "is that we do the heft o' the battle wi' our lungs, and the rest wi' our heels, which we'll rely on for defense, gin the affair is too hot. For my ain part I think I can beat the bushes o' that copse, and tramp the snaw crust, to the tune o' about twenty men; gin the rest o' ye can do as weel, we hae the power o' eighty men; and I'll set our general down for as good as forty more."

So they went to the dell, at nightfall, and posted themselves under Angus's direction. The night was dark, and the little band of McLeods came warily on; as they reached the head of the hollow, where the

road went down to the burn, they halted, when they heard the tramp of feet on the hillside; for the five men tramping the crusted snow sounded like the tread of an army.

They heard the order given, in a suppressed tone, for the second division to make a detour round the hill, to intercept their retreat; then there was some countermarching and the order was given to seize the ford.

The confusion of mind as to the plans of this unseen foe added to the panic with which the McLeods beat a hasty retreat.

John dubbed this adventure "The Rout of Moy"; and became famous not only for his tactics, but also as a skald, when, to admiring circles of the Jacobites, he told, with many a thrilling touch, the story of this famous victory.

The two armies lay in winter quarters, the one at Inverness and the other at Aberdeen. The Duke of Cumberland contented himself with quartering his men on the Jacobite families, confiscating estates, burning houses, and laying waste the lands of those who had "gone out."

From this devastation the Stoneywold estate was protected by the deed of factory, which the Laird had given to his wife. But an English company of dragoons, under command of Captain Leighton, was quartered at the Hall. He was a gentleman, and interpreted his orders in a spirit of chivalry toward an unprotected woman. His exposure to the rigors of a northern winter laid him up with a severe illness, through which Mrs. Muir, with the help of Helen

Gunn, nursed him, and she wrote to his mother, in the south of England, that her son, sick and far from home, was in the hands of one who recognized the tie to another mother's son, amid all the bitterness which war engenders.

He would have paid for it with his life if he had been left to the rough nursing of his men; and, when he left, he told Mrs. Muir, in a manly and tender way, that he knew that he owed his life to her and Helen, and would never forget it.

The Prince's army found occupation in constant forays for subsistence, in the assault and destruction of the old castle at Inverness, and the destruction of Fort Augustus.

During a season of comparative inaction, Stoneywold gained permission to lead an expedition for the relief of the Earl of Cromarty, who was hindered from joining the Prince by Duncan Forbes, who, with a small force, kept his neighbors in subjection.

The Lord President retreated before the energetic pursuit of Stoneywold across the Firth of Dornock, and, having a brig to patrol this long narrow neck of water, settled himself securely on the western shore. This seemed indeed to put an end to the pursuit, for the insurgents could bring no vessel to cope with the brig.

"John," said the Laird, "we must win across this narrow water."

"It isna the water that bothers me, my Laird; but the guns o' yon brig, which look unco angry," answered John.

"Do ye tak' the men down the Firth, and I will

gang up the shore, and, by morning, we will gather enough fishers' boats to carry us over, and, gin the mist will hang for twa hours on the water, the brig will do us nae harm." And, sure enough, under the very guns of the brig, they crossed in the rowboats, and fell upon the over-confident Lord President, who was forced to beat such a hasty retreat that all his camp equipage fell a prey to his active pursuers.

Another portion of the army was in constant skirmish with the parties sent out by Cumberland to overawe the Lowlanders; and, in this service, the men of Aberdeen bore their part.

But, as spring opened, all these minor operations were brought to an end, and the forces were concentrated to meet the army of the Duke, who had taken up his march from Aberdeen, along the coast, accompanied by a fleet of storeships. He advanced very slowly, and there was ample time to make their preparations and discuss the plan and place at which they should give him battle.

On April 11 he reached the Spey. Here Lord Lewis Gordon and Stoneywold, and a number of the more ardent spirits, were anxious to make a stand.

"The river is rapid, and the banks are steep," urged Lord Gordon. "Our Highland men can meet them with the advantage of ground that will give them a chance to charge as they love to do; and their strength and bravery will tell against the discipline of our enemy."

"It is the Highland frontier," said old Keppock, with glowing enthusiasm. "It will fire our men to

ken that they hold them back, at the very door, and winna let them tread a foot on Highland soil."

"This is worth a whole regiment o' men," plead Stoneywold. "I am sure I can hold the Spey against twice our force."

Lord George yielded, against his own convictions; and Lord Gordon, Keppock, and Stoneywold were given 1200 men to withstand the passage of the Duke's army over the Spey.

Lord Gordon insisted upon throwing up some petty breastworks, in view of the pitiful size of their force.

"It winna answer ony good purpose, my Laird," urged Stoneywold. "The laddies wad gang waist-deep in the roarin' water, and fight like demons; but your ditches will mak' cowards o' them."

"And why not?" said Keppock. "A man can fight, in the open, till muir or river rins red; but wha will be penned, like sheep in a slaughter-bught, and not lose courage?"

Somewhat crestfallen this little force fell back on the main army, without the loss of a single man, it is true, but without having held the enemy in check for an hour. All these things gave the men a feeling that their leaders lacked plan and purpose.

On April 15, the Duke's army halted at Nairn to hold a feast in honor of the commander's birthday. This festivity suggested the possibility of a surprise, when the enemy were off their guard, after the revel. At eight o'clock that night they set out, Lord George Murray himself in command; for they all felt that this was a promising opportunity. How often had just such a situation given them an overwhelming vic-

tory. But forced marches through the glens and over the moors, on their forays for food, had wasted the energies of the men, and the feuds and want of purpose among their leaders had dispirited them.

Lord Murray gave orders that the divisions should approach the camp by different routes.

"The men are not to use firearms at all," he said, "but must fall silently on the foe, when they are asleep, cut the tent-ropes, pitch over the tents, and stab, with dirk or claymore, wherever they see the canvas bulge."

The very tone of the order seemed to picture their helpless foe before them, in the toils of their own tents; and the men felt for their dirks.

They started with impetuous ardor, but the night was pitch dark and the moorland was rugged, and the men were worn by hunger and cold; and, at two in the morning, they were still three miles away from the enemy's camp.

"There is but a short time before the dawn will be breakin'," said John Gunn, as he kept close beside Muir, wondering how the Laird held such a stride, after six hours' march.

"It will gar us see where to strike, John," answered Muir.

"Aye, my Laird, and it will gar them see us, before we strike," said John.

"Ah! John man, what was that?" said Muir, as he heard a drum beat in the enemy's camp, but refused credence to his own ears.

"It is the token that we are seen already," replied John.

"That canna be," answered Muir; "for ye couldna tell a man frae a furze bush, twenty feet awa'."

"For a' that," answered John, "the furze bushes bide still; and, gin ye see them move, it is time to be awake."

They were some forty rods in advance of the main body.

"It may be as well to bide here, until we ken what Lord George mak's o' the racket," said John.

So they stood still; but the dark mass in the distance did not come any nearer, and they fell back on the main body, to find that a retreat had been ordered.

Stoneywold was indignant, and hurried after Lord Lewis, to seek an explanation of this hasty surrender of their plan.

"My good Stoneywold, it was plain as the daylight that we could not take them unawares. Whether they saw us or not, they were certainly awake, and we would have found them intrenched, and would have fought fresh men with men weary and worn by a long night march."

Muir could not resist the potent wisdom of this reasoning and was perforce content; but the Prince was furious, and denounced Lord Murray as a coward and traitor.

There were loud contests for and against the commander-in-chief, as the dispirited Highlanders made their way back to Drum Mossie Moor, in the neighborhood of Culloden House, and resumed their desperate efforts to find food in a barren land.

John had spent the previous day in foraging, over

a wide district, to get some meat for a haggis, or a fowl for a cock-a-leekie. The meal-pocks were empty, and, even if full, this was a sorry diet, for so long. John was bent on giving Stoneywold a more solid stay to his stomach, for to-morrow's battle. As soon as they reached camp, he set to work preparing the meal, against Stoneywold's waking.

The damp ground and long march had so stiffened the joints of the men that they were hard to rouse; but, by dint of threats and persuasions, judiciously mingled, he got enough of them at work gathering wood and kindling a fire to have some porridge ready for the men; and a haggis in fair condition for Stoneywold's breakfast.

When James came, at John's call, the hungry looks of the men made him suspect that it was at the expense of their fasting that he was feasting.

"Ye hounds, canna ye leave the Laird to his bit breakfast?" said John, scowling on the men.

"Na, John, we'll share alike," replied James. "We are a' to fight in the same cause this day, side by side, and wha kens whose hand shall strike down that butcher Cumberland. So let a' fare alike. Come, laddies, I'll share your parritch, and ye shall taste my haggis."

With keen disgust, John saw man after man come forward for a taste of the savory dish; but, for himself, declined to touch a morsel of it.

They had scarce finished their hasty meal when Lochiel came with the summons from Lord George Murray to muster the men by clans, as the enemy was already forming their line of battle on Culloden Moor.

"God forfend that there be no foe in our own camp when we face the Saxons," said the Cameron chief.

Stoneywold looked up in surprise.

Lochiel answered the look. "Aye, we may have more cause to fear friend than foe. The McDonalds have claimed a place on the right o' the line, and Clanranald has e'en said they will fight there or nowhere."

"And what said my Laird Murray to this?" inquired Stoneywold.

"He told them that he was put in command by the Prince and was responsible to him for the best disposal of his men; and, with this, they carried their complaint to the Prince. Only old Keppock said he was ready to fight a Saxon, right or left."

"Aye," broke in John Gunn, "we'll see that man to the fore, gin he has to gae there alane."

"But what says the Prince?" inquired Stoneywold anxiously.

"Ah!" replied Lochiel, "what says the Prince ever; a bonnie word and a smiling promise, which I fear me are not like to suit these rough western men; and Lord George will place his men as he thinks fit. He is ready enough to fight for the Prince, but not with him."

This was disheartening news; but it had nothing to do with the present exigency, which was pressing enough to absorb, for the time, all the energies of the Laird of Stoneywold and Lord Gordon, and such of their retainers as were at hand. They found a piper and bid him play the pibroch, and they sounded the

slogan of clan after clan. There was a feeble, scattering response; but it dismayed them to see how small the muster of men was.

With those who did respond, they organized parties who went through the dells and copses, beating the bushes as if on a fox hunt, finding the men wrapped in their plaids, so fast bound in the sleep of the weak and weary that they could be roused only by a hard shaking.

They staggered to their feet and mechanically followed where they were led. As band after band of these stragglers came in, Lord George and Stoneywold organized them, under the leadership of those who were more thoroughly awake, and sent them to the front.

In a little knot, apart from the rest, were the McDonalds, the chieftains in excited consultation, the men catching the murmur of their discontent, with a sullen look that boded ill for the share that they would take in the coming struggle.

In this light it appeared to them all, leaders and men alike; and, to most of them, it seemed the final and supreme effort on which hung all the fortunes of the house of Stuart.

But the Prince, for whom this desperate strife was made, with easy assurance, felt that the crowning moment of his life was come; the quarrels of the petty chieftains did not ruffle his serenity; the privations of the men were but necessary incidents in the prosecution of his plans, and he was lavish in his promises of reward for their loyal service.

Upon Lord George Murray the perplexities of the

situation weighed heavily. He moved about, with careworn face, giving his orders with decision, but with a weary voice. He was facing ten thousand disciplined troops with six thousand dispirited men.

The position, too, was all in the enemy's favor. The wide moor, which the eye took in at a glance, showed no bit of rugged ground to aid the Highlanders in their peculiar mode of warfare, no chance for a surprise, no high ground from which to break on the foe, like one of their own wild mountain storms.

Lord George therefore hesitated, even after repeated orders from the Prince, to give the command to charge; for everything was against them, even the wind.

At last the clamor of his men, standing helpless under the slaughter made by the Duke's well-served artillery, forced him to give the order. The front rank of the Highlanders straggled obliquely across the moor and was broken in pieces before the second rank was in motion, and so swiftly did the tide of war roll back the broken front upon the advancing reserves, that in a half hour Culloden Moor was clear of every man that could escape.

The white rose was torn, and its petals scattered so that none might ever gather them. Through all the wild havoc John Gunn kept close to Stoneywold, more bent on shielding his Laird than on saving the cause of Prince Charlie.

The cold-blooded slaughter, which earned for the Duke of Cumberland the epithet of "butcher," and the hot pursuit of fugitives under the order to seize the persons of rebels, and, if they resisted, put them

to the sword at once, set every man to escape as best he might. Orders were also given that the goods and chattels of the slain were forfeit to their captors; "which made the soldiers very alert in searching and apprehending rebels," naïvely remarks one chronicler; "and if others suffered in carrying out this function, the accident could not be helped," he adds.

The forces of the Duke, scattered over the country in detached parties, charged with this congenial duty, did their grim commander's will with zest.

One night, in the latter part of April, the Lady of Stoneywold, sitting by her open window, at twilight, with a heavy heart, knowing not what to hope or fear, was startled by a stone thrown in at the window, around which was wrapped a bit of paper with this message on it, "The Highland army was destroyed at Culloden—the Prince is a fugitive with a price on his head—the Laird and John escaped." It was from her quondam patient, the English captain, on his way to the south; and she felt well repaid for her care of him.

The Prince fled westward from the bloody field, with a small escort of Highlanders.

John kept close to his Laird, and they were swept, by the rout, off the other side of the moor, and did not catch sight of the Prince. With a few companions they made their way to the woods of Kingussie, and there dispersed.

Stoneywold and John concluded to push their way toward Aberdeenshire, and at least show themselves alive to Janet and Helen.

CHAPTER XIII.

"EVERY MAN BOWS TO THE BUSH HE GETS BIELD
FRAE."

THEY had put their cause upon the hazard of the die, and it was lost. This the most sanguine must now admit. The Prince was a fugitive, with a price on his head; his followers were scattered, living in the forests and on the moors, hunted like wild beasts.

It behooved every man to look to his own welfare and escape, as best he could, the consequences of his adherence to the fallen house of Stuart.

As Stoneywold and John made their way, down through the Braemar wilds, toward Aberdeenshire, they had little to say of the great battle on which their fate had turned; they were more concerned with the dangers of pursuit, which threatened them on every hand.

After many a hairbreadth escape, they reached the foot of Cairngorm, the old home of the Lochgellie band, the sight of which stirred in John's heart many a memory of the past, and brought vividly before him the thought of Helen and the Lady Janet, both longing to hear tidings of the Laird and himself. And yet they were not in such sad case as one might think. John congratulated himself that the Laird had come

safe and sound out of the rout; and the excitement of pursuit kept the Laird from dwelling on the disaster, which, after all, was only an incident in the fickle fortunes of war.

As they came near home they lay hidden in the woods until nightfall, and then, making their way down the Don side to the neighborhood of John's cottage, Stoneywold remained in hiding while John went forward to reconnoiter.

Helen met him with the news that a company of English soldiers were quartered at the Hall, and that the Lady Janet, with the children, slept in the rear room of the first story, in the left wing.

Nothing daunted by so trivial an obstacle, James determined to see his Janet.

"Let me gae," said Helen, "and fetch the Leddy Janet to our cot. I'll tell her that Nell is sick; or I'll change frocks wi' her, and lie down by the bairns, till she comes back."

"No, Helen," answered the Laird, "ye canna change hair wi' the Leddy Janet, nor gie her your free stride; and I winna let ony rin a risk that I dinna tak' mysel'. It wad rouse their suspicion to see you come and gae by night. I will tap at my Leddy's window, and, gin I rouse the guards, it will be fight or flight; and I can beat them at baith."

So off he posted, near midnight, disguised in the dress of a farmer's gillie, which he had gotten from James Jamieson, one of his tenants. He crept toward the house, but not so softly as to escape the quick ear of Janet, who lay thinking of him, as she had done

every night, far on toward morning, since the message had come from the English captain.

He raised his hand to tap on the window, but she was there, and had recognized him through his disguise; the sash was lifted before he could give the signal, and, vaulting to the sill, he was by her side again.

Their talk was all in whispers; for, in such troublous times, no risk was to be run of children's prattling tongues.

"Ah, Jamie, I feared me it wad come to naught," sighed Janet, when the first greetings were over. "But I have to thank God that ye didna gie your life for the feckless Prince."

"Aye, Janet, we are not in fine case, but we maun hope for brighter days; and you and the bairns are safe," answered James, picking a crumb of comfort from the forlorn situation.

"But what will ye do, Jamie; and where will ye hide?" queried Janet, thinking less of the lost cause than of her husband's safety.

"I will tak' to the moors and hide there, till the summons comes frae the Prince for the gathering of the clans, somewhere in the Highlands," said James, with more assurance than he really felt.

"Ah! Jamie, canna ye let it alane? The Prince will ne'er gather ye but to the grave. The English say that he has already taen ship to France. They say that he canna bide in Scotland, for a price is on his head, which wad mak' mony a Highland laird rich; and there will surely be some wha will gie him owre to the English."

"I tell ye, Janet, Prince Charlie will ne'er be gien up, at ony price. Whamever he trusts will be true to him; for he has that bonnie way that wins a' men to love him," said James stoutly.

"He doesna win a' men to fight for him. But let us leave him to his ain devices, and tell me, Jamie, where will ye gae and how shall I ken that ye are safe and well? Ah! it is but a sorry business to be at," said Janet sadly.

"I shall bide, for the nonce, wi' James Jamieson; and you can reach me by seein' Helen Gunn. She will gae back and forth to her own cot, every day, from Jamieson's," answered James.

Then they fell to discussing what their future was to be; and, though it was cloudy enough, they both kept brave hearts, taking comfort in the thought that they were spared to each other, and, in the light of this, the prospect seemed to brighten. It was a time to try the souls of men, and women too, but the trial brought forth power of endurance and hope in these two.

The merciless crusade of Cumberland against all who were even suspected of sympathy with the lost cause, including defenseless women and children, determined John and Stoneywold to linger in the neighborhood, and, if Janet were threatened, to gather the tenantry and sell their lives dearly in defense of wife and children.

But Janet had so many friends among the gentry of the shire, of both political creeds, that she was in no danger; and, though subjected to many annoyances and harsh exactions, was not in peril of her life.

The regularity of Helen's visits to Jamieson's outlying farm drew suspicion upon her; and, one night, she was aware that she was followed by three or four soldiers. They might suspect as they pleased, but they were greatly mistaken when they dreamed of outwitting a girl of the Lochgellie band.

Helen was not many rods away from her cot before she knew that they were tracking her; so, instead of turning off toward Jamieson's, she kept right on up the Don side until she came to the Ourie Ford, a doubtful bit of water to cross even by daylight, but safe for her in the darkest night. In she plunged, and, as the men broke cover and ran for the edge of the stream, she was fairly over to the other side, and, picking up three or four stones, she threw them in the water, giving the impression that she was still floundering in the stream.

The men leveled their carbines and fired for the sound; Helen screamed and threw more stones into the water, and again the shots were fired at the rushing Don. She sat on the bank groaning, while the men debated whether they should ford the stream; at last, hand in hand, they filed cautiously into the water. Helen sat on the bank, luring them on by fainter and more piteous moans.

About midway, the ford, which, up to that point, bears up stream, takes a sharp turn downward; and, just at the angle, there is a deep hole with a whirling eddy, whose shivering waters give the ford its name of "Ourie."

Helen waited for them to reach this "ourie water"; on they came, warily at first, but growing bolder as

the ford showed no sign of deepening, and enticed by Helen's fainter groans. Then came a splash and a cry for help; Helen's laughter rang out like a demon of the woods, as she shouted, "Ye hae followed the Don kelpie, and noo she has ye by the lugs"; and, as the terrified trio struggled back to the shore, leaving their drowned comrade to drift down the stream, they believed it; in which belief they were confirmed when, on their way back to the Hall, they stopped at John Gunn's cottage and found Helen fast asleep in bed.

But Stoneywold felt that he could no longer be kept in hiding so near home, without exposing others to danger, and so left the neighborhood and made for the wilds of Buchan, with John Gunn as his escort. Nell went to the Hall as Lady Stoneywold's waiting maid, and Helen followed John to the moorland, resuming her gypsy garb and mode of life, and carrying letters to and fro, concealed in the braids of her long black hair.

These were stirring days; the Prince, in woman's dress, was being guided by secret friends from place to place, living the life of a hunted hare; and scattered bands of his followers were sharing a like fate. Some had leagued themselves together under the name of "Caterans"; and of one such band the famous Ranald More was leader. Their hiding-place was a sea cave in the rocky shore below Peterhead, accessible only by a footpath wide enough for a single person, and defended by those who would die to a man rather than surrender, on the grim terms which Cumberland offered, "that they should be reserved for the pleasure of the king." What this meant, the

hapless fate of those who threw themselves upon his grace bore witness.

Ranald had not been "out with the Prince"; but the merciless conduct of Cumberland, he declared, alone induced him to take command of these men; for, being branded for slaughter, they were fairly driven to this mode of life.

A little band of refugees were soon gathered under Stoneywold's leadership, who led a roving life, moving from place to place along the edge of the moorland, as their methods of subsistence off the neighboring farmers brought them into unpleasant notoriety.

It was a life of constant excitement and adventure, which was charming to John Gunn, and not without interest for Stoneywold.

Brave, cheerful, and inspiring, his men were devoted to the Laird, and watched over his safety with a jealous care.

Their adventures had often a savor of fun, which let them have a laugh at misfortune. One day, on the hill of Mormond, the little band had seated themselves to a dinner, which, for a week past, had been, with them, a movable feast, owing to the pressure of pursuit. They were scarce seated when warning was given them of a party of soldiers coming up the hill.

The detachment was too strong for them to think of resistance, so they betook themselves to flight; but, before leaving, John, determined that his haggis should not tickle the palates of the foe, upset the pot; the stout old ram's stomach held together, and down the hill rolled the steaming pudding. One of the

English soldiers, to whom "the fair, fat, sonsie face" of haggis was a stranger, dexterously caught the rolling ball on the end of his bayonet, and it burst, bedewing him and his comrades with its hot and savory contents.

"See there," cried John, in great glee, "even haggis, God bless her, can charge down hill!"

But the hunt grew hot, and this little band was forced to disperse. John went to Ranald More and joined his band of Caterans; Helen returned to Leddy Janet, and passed back and forth to the refugees with letters, or the safer missives by word of mouth.

Stoneywold took refuge with Allan Graeme, a small farmer living on the edge of the moorland; and, donning the dress of a gillie, worked on the farm, and slept in an outhouse. But the disguise was only of the outer man, and he soon found that he was watched, and must seek a more obscure hiding-place than even an outlying farm. So he betook himself to the heart of the moor, to the hut of old Davie Gair, a cobbler, and, if all tales were true, a poacher when his necessities drove him thereto; but a douce, honest man, when he had enough to eat and drink.

"And wha can be streectly honest, on an empty stomach?" he would say.

To him Stoneywold applied, "Can ye gie me shelter?"

"That I can," answered auld Davie, looking his man over, and wondering why such as he should be in want of shelter; but too discreet to ask any questions. "I canna thole a spierin' man or a claverin' woman,"

thought auld Davie; "and I maun bide by my ain rules."

So he made no objection when Muir proposed to make an excavation under the bed, forming a burrow where he ran to cover, whenever any stranger approached the hut.

"Aye, the rabbits hae their burrows, and the foxes their holes; and the one are a sair kittle folk, and the ither sair fendy; and belike this braw laddie is only followin' oot the Scripture 'to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a cushat.' Time will show," said wise auld Davie.

Muir dared not go abroad by day, and could not endure the long-drawn idleness, and so set himself to learn the cobbler's trade, while he had his cracks with auld Davie; and to such good purpose did he work that his old master was astonished, and said to him one day:

"Jeems, my man, what for did ye no tell me that ye had been bred a souter?"

"And so I was, freend," answered Muir gayly, "but, to tell ye God's truth, I was an idle loon, gey weel-faured and owre fond o' the lassies; so I joined the Prince's lads, and ye see what is come o't."

"Ou, aye," said auld Davie, "and that is the bee in your bonnet, laddie. Aweel, ye're nane the waur for that, in my estimation. I hae an unco kind feelin' for them that arena come by their ain in this warld; for I am ane o' that ilk mysel'. I was made for a bonnier life than to cobble in a muirland hut, and I hae a fellow feelin' for Prince Charlie. He is

a bonnie lad by a' accounts. Did ye see him wi' your ain e'en?"

"That I did," answered Muir merrily. "I saw him and spoke wi' him, and stood beside him at Cul-loden."

"Wow! but ye were in luck," said auld Davie. "But what will he mak' noo, think ye?"

"He'll mak' sail for France, by the first fair wind and chance that befa's him," answered Muir.

"And what will ye be doin', when that comes to pass?" asked Davie. "The bonnie Prince winna be makin' aff himsel' and leavin' his faithfu' followers to their fate, I'm thinkin'."

"Aweel, he has a' that he can see to, in securin' a passage for himsel'," said Muir, inclined to change the subject. "It has come to that pass where ilka man maun tak' tent o' himsel'."

"Aweel, Jeems," said auld Davie, after a thoughtful pause, "then I count it weel-nigh as puir a trade as cobblin', this followin' in the train o' Princes. It is like marriage, man; it leaves ye nae chance to better yoursel' whan aince ye are in it. It is a feckless fox that has but ane openin' to his lair; for aftwhiles the grand question in this life is, not hoo to get in, but hoo are ye to get oot."

But these comfortable cracks with auld Davie were not enough to occupy the restless spirit of Muir; and, from time to time, he made excursions into the neighborhood. One day, when he had gone over to visit John Gunn in the cave of Ranald More, he had gotten but a short way on his return, when a stray picket spied him, as he was crossing a rough bit of moorland,

and called on him to halt, which had the effect of putting Muir to his best speed; and, as the soldier fired a signal gun, Muir, making over the hill, ran toward the seashore and took refuge in a cliff cave, until the friendly shelter of night should let him return in safety to the cobbler's hut.

A heavy rain was falling, and Muir bethought him that it might be easy to track him, on the soft ground, to his lair at auld Davie's; so he took out his cobbler's tools and beguiled the tedium of the long afternoon by reversing the heels on his brogues; and spent the time right merrily, to judge by his smiling face. When it was fairly dark, he set out to walk the ten miles from the shore to auld Davie's hut; and he found it a weary way to plod, with this new adjustment of heel and toe; and the joke, over which he had chuckled in the afternoon, was rather against him when he was putting it in practice; but, for all that, there were the footmarks, plain as day, leading away from auld Davie's door.

The old cobbler chuckled to himself, at intervals, all through the morning, after Muir had shown him his afternoon's job; and he went out more than once to inspect the tracks.

"It be a braw thing to gang about your ain business and send ither folk on the way to mind theirs, at the same time. It is a pity, Jeems, that ye canna apply this maist excellent preinciple to the ither parts o' a man besides his heels. Ye can tak' a bit leather and big yoursel' anither pair o' brogues, Jeems; ye maun let that pair bide as they are. It is a canty thocht, and they may prove their value anither time." The

old man could remember some occasions when he himself would have found such a pair of brogues not amiss. "Let them bide, Jeems; it is uncanny to meddle wi' what has proven sic a providential blessin' to ye."

So James set himself to making a new pair of brogues.

But he lived the life of a hunted animal; and, when Janet sent him a letter telling him of the Prince's escape, he listened to her urgent appeal, and to "Norway over the faem" he fled, with blind old Glenbucket and Lord Lewis Gordon.

The night before he sailed Muir bid old Davie good-by. "I winna forget ye, Davie, when I see better days, for ye've been a true friend to me," said Muir, grasping the horny hand of the old cobbler.

"And I winna forget ye, Jeems, my man; ye hae whiled awa' mony a tedious hour, and hae gien me a hint o' things outside the muir. I'll miss ye, Jeems," and the old cobbler wrung his hand; "but ye hae left me food for reflection, and the toe-heeled brogues for an hour o' need. God guard ye, lad-die;" and he stood in the doorway of his lonely old hut and watched James stride across the moor, and out of sight, in the misty moonlight.

Muir betook himself to Ranald More's cave. It was not pleasant to leave the friendly old cobbler on the moor, to part with John would be a real pain. He tried to think of it as only temporary.

They walked up and down the beach, far on toward midnight, talking of all the many things they had in common. Then James turning to him said: "John,

ye hae been to me as a friend that is closer than a brother. I canna gae to a strange land leavin' ye where ye are now. Promise me, John, that ye'll leave the Caterans."

"They hae gien me shelter, my Laird; I canna forget that," said John.

"I ken that, John; but it is the old story over again. Ye were forced to leave the Lochgellies for Helen's sake; ye maun leave the Caterans for the same guid reason."

"The way was open for me to leave the Lochgellies; I see naught for it but to bide wi' the Caterans," replied John.

"Ye maun do as I am doin', John; ye maun emigrate," said Muir.

"I canna frame my tongue to foreign speech, at my time o' life," answered John.

"There are rich lands in Virginia. Gae there wi' Helen. It winna be for lang. When the breeze has blown a bit, we can be back, in twa years or sae. I canna gae, John, till I hae your word; and the skiff is waitin' there on the shingle, ayont that point o' rock," and Stoneywold waited.

John was silent for a few moments.

"I will leave the Caterans, my Laird," he said; and Muir wrung his hand hard, and went down the beach to the skiff that was waiting to take him on board the lugger.

After James was gone Stoneywold seemed, to Janet, haunted with his presence; the house would echo, in her dreams, to his step; field and glen were peopled with the memory of their rides and walks together.

These were busy days, when she had to undertake the management of all affairs herself, but not busy enough to let her forget; and the very fields and woods grew lonely.

It was lonelier still when news came that the High Court of Judiciary had arraigned the Laird of Stoneywold for treason and pronounced judgment of banishment on him.

To be sure, she was proud to hear that only two witnesses could be found against him, and their testimony was chiefly to the effect that he restrained his men from violence and plunder, which the Lord Justice said was more to the credit of the Laird of Stoneywold than to that of the witness for the Crown.

"They canna even condemn him wi'out finding summat to his credit," she said.

But for all this, his banishment emphasized her lonely condition, and she made up her mind to share his exile.

At first, she had purposed to put John in charge, as her factor; but she found that he was a man of too much mark to slip quietly back into his old place, without some reasonable explanation of his absence; and hence John, in accordance with his promise to Stoneywold, went with his wife and wean to Virginia. It seemed to Janet that everyone was seeking a home in other lands; and so she leased the estate to one of the old tenants, and went to join her husband in Sweden.

As she rode down the avenue for the last time and looked back at the shaded path under the old beach, where she had come down to meet Jamie that night,

and, for the first time, had lain her head on his breast, and felt the clasp of his strong arms about her, the dear old life and its precious memories seemed slipping from her, as the dead lose their hold on life and its nearest ties; and her heart sank within her at the thought of the unknown life before her.

"It was a sair price," she thought, "to pay for sic an uncertain gain; which after all wasna gain, but only loss. But, gin I tell that to Jamie, he will say that women always look at war in this fashion. Aweel! then I wish that Prince Charlie had been blessed wi' a canty wife to counsel him."

Janet found her wandering hero already established, and they began life again, in a foreign land; and, while all around was strange, it was home to them, for they were together; and to Janet it was a haven of rest, after the stormy two years.

With a brave heart and strong purpose Muir (or Jamieson as he called himself) leased an estate, and, by his energy and skill, made himself a man of mark in the land of his adoption. At the invitation of the King of Sweden he undertook the direction of some public improvements, which won him great honor and a patent of nobility from the king.

Janet thoroughly appreciated these honors done her husband, and yet, as she said, "The sun shines fair in Sweden, but it hasna the blink it had in our ain coun-tree, our bonnie Scotland, of all lands the fairest to my e'en."

Six of her children were gone to the land o' the leal, and her son James, with two daughters who were left, she longed to educate in Scotland. At last

James consented to the separation, and, in the spring of 1759, Janet returned to the well-known scenes of her native land; and, when she was back again, her longing grew to remain and live and die in Scotland.

She busied herself not only with her children's education, but also in securing permission for her husband to return. After three years of diligent effort she was rewarded by welcoming him home again.

For more than fifteen years his eyes had not been gladdened with the sight of the banks and braes of Don, and he was eager as a child to set out, with Janet, from Edinburgh for Aberdeenshire.

As they drew nearer to the old home they rode along in silence. James missed, in thought, that trusty guide of his youth and friend of his riper years, John Gunn, the tried and true, and Janet could not banish from her present happiness the memory of the little, tinkling feet that had merrily trod the halls of the old home, who were now resting in their graves in a foreign land.

When they reached Stoneywold the tenants were out in force to welcome back the "Laird and Leddy," the toddlin' bairns now grown to be braw lads and lasses; but there were other bairns to take their place.

There was feasting and merry-making, as in old times, and it was plain to see that the Laird and Leddy had not been forgotten, as the years had flown. They looked on the tenants, wondering how some had grown so old; and the tenants thought how changed the young Laird and Leddy were.

But they were not changed at heart; for the very first business that James undertook was to seek out his moorland friends and care for them.

For auld Davie he could do no more than mark his last resting-place by a simple monument, on which was carved this record: "He gave shelter and food to him that was ready to perish." As he stood by the stone, James wondered what had become of the toe-heeled brogues.

Allan Graeme, too, was gone to his grave, ripe as one of his own corn-shocks; but Stoneywold took his widow and five children home with him and put them on one of his best farms, and had the boys taught trades, and, when the daughters were married, the noble old Laird gave them away like a father.

When John Gunn heard that the Laird was back, he offered himself for the old service again; and, as James Jamieson, the name which had served his master abroad, he came to the old place, after an absence of many years. His hair was snow white, but his form was erect, his step firm and his heart warm and true as when, on the moorland, he followed the fortunes of his Laird, for better or worse.

For nearly twenty years James and Janet lived a quiet life that was like the still waters of a deep, land-locked harbor, where the ships lie at anchor, with their sails furled, and rock with an easy motion on the soft, swelling tide, and forget that they have breasted storms and scarce escaped shipwreck.

After James had been gathered to his fathers in the quiet kirkyard, in Janet's eyes the last and best of the Laids of Stoneywold, she left the place and went

to live in Aberdeen; remembering how a dowager Lady of Stoneywold had made her entrance to the house uncomfortable, she determined that her son's bride should come there the undisputed mistress of Castlewood Hall.

She took Helen Gunn along with her, John having died some years ago, and Nell being happily married and settled on one of the farms of the estate.

There, in a snug lodging, she passes a peaceful old age, Helen and her dog Duchie being her constant companions.

On one side of the ingle sits old Lady Stoneywold knitting sedulously on a stocking, and on the other side is Helen hard at work on its mate; bound to one another by the tie of old times and the memory of James and John. Every now and then the maid is summoned from the kitchen to take up the stitches which the old women ever and anon let slip, each too proud to ask help from the other.

Duchie lies at their feet, except when she is beforehand with one of them and gets possession of one of their easy-chairs; in which case she snarls, and leaves them to find another seat.

Their dinner is more often regulated to suit the capricious taste of Duchie than to cater to their own appetite. "It is really all the enjoyment in life which Duchie has," Janet would say, when Helen remonstrates. "We have our knitting, you know, and our talk of old times, and our game of piquet, while Duchie, poor thing, has only her dinner."

Their game of piquet was a series of skirmishes; for, though Helen had been taught the game by Janet,

she claimed some points of superior knowledge, which Janet stoutly contested.

Janet was more than half blind, and could not distinguish diamonds from hearts, or clubs from spades; while Helen, who saw clearly enough, had grown very deaf, and must needs guess, in large part, what was said to her. So they blundered along and fought a battle for the possession of almost every trick.

"O Helen, Helen, ye are sae deaf and stupid," Janet would say, when her patience was exhausted.

"Yes, my Leddy, it's a sair pity that ye canna see," Helen would answer at random.

"Aweel, Helen, it is a sore affliction to be sae deaf; blindness is a sma' matter compared wi' it, for the loss o' the eyes leaves the mind clear, but the deaf are always sae hard o' understandin'," the old lady would retort, commiserating herself as well as Helen.

"Yes, my Leddy, I ken it is my trick, as ye say," Helen would answer.

"I maun bear wi' ye, Helen, for auld lang syne," sighed the old lady.

"Yes, my Leddy, ye maun follow suit; ye are playin' hearts to my diamonds."

Young Roderick McKenzie, her nephew, came, from time to time, to visit Janet and hear from her lips the stirring tales of old times, which she loved to tell, interspersed with keen but kindly thrusts at the manners of the present day; and this is the description that he wrote home to Ardross:

"You ask me what Aunt Janet is like. I wish you could see her. She is a beautiful old lady; her teeth are still fresh and white and all there, her lips ruddy,

her cheeks suffused with as delicate a tint as when she was the 'lily and rose of Ardross,' and with the same evenness of mind that has accompanied her through all her trials. Her fair, comely face is encircled in a pure white, close cap with a frilled border, over which was a rich black lace cap, of the form shown in several of Queen Mary's pictures; she wore a gray satin gown with laced stomacher with silver buckles, and deeply frilled hanging sleeves that reach to the elbow; and over her arms are black lace mittens leaving the fingers free for the ornament of rings; about her shoulders was thrown a black lace scarf, and she wore high-heeled shoes with small, square, silver buckles. From her waistband was suspended a portly shagreen case, and on the opposite side was a wire sheath for her knitting."

Such was Janet McKenzie Muir, the Lady of Stoneywold, until her death in 1805; belonging to a past century in dress and manners, and living in the past, waiting in the present, and hoping for the future.

THE END.



